

Path in Psychology

Jacob A. Belzen *Editor*

# Psychology of Religion

Autobiographical Accounts

 Springer

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Jacob A. Belzen  
University of Amsterdam  
NL-1012 GC Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
belzen@hum.uva.nl

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# Chapter 1

## The Comeback of the Psychology of Religion: The Aims of the Present Volume

Jacob A. Belzen



### Right Away: Some Words on What this Volume Is and Is Not Going to Be About

“The psychology of religion is back. It is alive and kicking!” If that were the main message of the present volume, or even of this introduction, one would immediately need to raise some critical questions. We should at least ask why this assertion should count as special, as something worth mentioning, as anything new. Is it, for example, “news” that this branch of psychology is “back?” Many psychologists have never heard anything about the psychology of religion; a great number of them would be sincerely amazed if one were to ask their opinion about it. To the best of their knowledge, nothing like the “psychology of religion” exists; they

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J.A. Belzen (✉)

University of Amsterdam, NL-1012 GC Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
e-mail: belzen@hum.uva.nl



wouldn't have a clue what that is, could be, or should be. And many contemporaries who are or would be interested in a scholarly approach to the study of religion would perhaps be equally puzzled upon hearing the claim this essay opens with: unlike most present-day psychologists, they may have heard about the psychology of religion, but only as something from the past, as something the founding fathers of psychology at large had been involved in, but that, for whatever reasons, already no longer existed by World War I. There have indeed been excellent scholars, well acquainted with the history of psychology, and themselves involved in the field of research on religion, who have declared the psychology of religion "dead" outright. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, an Israeli-American psychologist who published extensive research on religion, asserted in 1974 in the leading *Journal for the History of the Behavioral Sciences* that the psychology of religion ceased to exist by 1930 (Beit-Hallahmi, 1974, p. 87). And already in 1953, Jan Hendrik van den Berg, a leading international spokesman of the phenomenological movement in psychology and the first professor of psychology to be appointed at a Dutch theological faculty (Belzen, 2007), determined the "death" of psychology of religion to have occurred in 1921 (van den Berg, 1953, p. 36). That claims such as those of Beit-Hallahmi and van den Berg can be and have been refuted (Belzen, 2008), is not an issue to enter into right now: the existence and proliferation of their opinion is what matters here.

So, yes, to many it will be "news" to hear that something like the psychology of religion would be existing or would exist again. What is obviously the next critical question presents itself right away: is this "news" true at all? It is *not* going to be the task of this introduction, or of the present volume, to answer this question in a classically academic way: presenting all available evidence and leading the reader to an inductive conclusion. Without wanting to be arrogant, the project presented here assumes that anyone who picks up this volume already knows that the psychology of religion does indeed exist, that it has returned to prominence, and that it is even growing in size. To anyone in doubt, it could be pointed out that the number of publications in psychology dealing with religion is increasing spectacularly, that even books providing metaperspectives on this literature – whether called "handbook," "introduction to," or otherwise (Argyle, 2000; Bucher, 2007; Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009; Hemminger, 2003; Loewenthal, 2000; Paloutzian, 1996; Paloutzian & Park, 2005) – abound by now (even the American Psychological Association has published a number of best-selling volumes in this field: Pargament et al., 2013; Richards & Bergin, 1997, 2000, 2004; Shafranske, 1996; Sperry & Shafranske, 2005); that funding is increasingly available for all kinds of psychological research on religion; that there are a growing number of conferences, papers, and journals devoted to issues from the psychology of religion; that organizations for this field exist, have been revived, or are being founded; and that quite a number of academic tenure positions for the psychology of religion have been established, especially at European universities (in countries including Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom among others). To those for whom all of this is still "news," a quick search in any library or on the Internet will show readily enough, "The psychology of religion is alive and kicking."

Further critical questions could be brought up, however. Any of the quick searches alluded to in the previous paragraph will also readily show that this field called psychology of religion is even more heterogeneous than psychology at large: in principle, contributions to the psychology of religion could be made from any psychological discipline (e.g., developmental psychology, social psychology, physiological psychology), perspective (cognitive psychology, psychoanalysis, evolutionary psychology, etc.), or theory (e.g., attribution theory, terror management theory, theories about authoritarianism, admission, and many other issues). Moreover, the psychology of religion counts quite a number of practitioners without formal credentials in psychology (there are colleagues with degrees in psychiatry, psychoanalysis, theology, and other subjects). As with psychology at large, the question easily arises: what has this field to offer? What is its value? What does it really have to tell us? And if the psychology of religion is indeed “back,” from where did it return? Why did it disappear (if it did)? What is the difference between its present and its past: does it have anything more, better, new, or whatever, to tell compared with the situation of about a century ago? These fundamental questions deserve precise answers that are well thought through, and based on extensive knowledge of both past and present results and claims. To help prepare answers to such fundamental questions is the main goal of the present volume; in itself it does not have the goal to provide such, of necessity evaluative, answers.

Obviously, any such answer will depend on the criteria one employs, and these criteria will again depend on a number of very different factors. Equally obviously, therefore, the answer will depend on one’s estimation of psychology in general, on one’s attitude towards religion, and on one’s opinion about scientific research into religion; such estimations, attitudes, and opinions will depend on one’s professional training, on one’s position in the academic field, and on the kind of institution where one is employed; it will possibly depend on one’s age or at least the period of one’s training; the answer is likely to depend on the country where one is functioning. Less obviously, the answer will be influenced by all kinds of unreflected a prioris, on factors and motivations one is unconscious of, on coincidences and particularities in one’s personal life of whose importance one is unaware. Also, the answer will be determined by the level of sophistication allowed, on the context of the question being asked, on the person who is asking the question, and on the level of privacy granted to the answer. To be brief, there will be a variety of answers to the question about the value and achievements of the psychology of religion, just as there will be a great number of different answers to the question of what psychology is at all. And to make things even more complicated: there will be no criterion by which to tell whether an answer is entirely right or wrong. What is possible, however, is to judge the plausibility of answers given as well as the validity of the argumentation on behalf of such answers and their representativeness.

As has been indicated, this volume only offers steps towards answers to some of the questions. Ultimately, its orientation is towards the most fundamental issues, but a more proximate goal is to provide first-hand information about the development of the psychology of religion in its recent past. In order to know what the psychology of religion is, it is at least necessary to know where it came from and how it developed.

Along with inquiring about theories, their application and proliferation, about methods and techniques employed in research and practice, about institutions and organizations, some obvious questions are also: who have been its key players, what did they do and fail to do, and for what reasons. In such an historicizing procedure, it is only fair to grant a voice to these key players themselves: what do they themselves have to say about the current growth of the psychology of religion, and about their role in it? Where do they themselves see their contribution: what did they expect, what did they aim at, what did they achieve, and what do they regret? To anyone interested in the psychology of religion in general, listening to what some of its prime figures have to say will be interesting and useful. To those interested in the recent history of that field and the disciplines it relates to (such as psychology in general, but also the sciences of religion), the information in this volume will be indispensable. Finally, in some ways, this volume will function as a source to future historians and to those drawing up a picture of the state of the art in the psychology of religion.

### **The Triad: Historical–Systematical–Empirical**

The greater part of the best scholarly work consists of three components, which in reality cannot be separated from one another. All good systematic work, all theory, must relate to what is commonly called empirical reality, and it must be aware of where it positions itself in terms of the history of a certain field of scholarship. Equally, all empirical work aims at systematic contributions to a certain discipline or scholarly field, and it always rests on theoretical assumptions. Historical research in its turn is always empirical, whether it proceeds quantitatively or otherwise, and it always sets out from some systematic point of view. It follows that the present volume too can be situated in different ways, and these ways are not necessarily the ones intended by the authors and the editor. Be this as it may, we can at least quickly identify the kind of work this volume does not aim to contribute to although anyone wanting to employ it differently than was intended can probably do so.

As indicated in the previous paragraph, this volume is not offering a specimen of historical scholarship, although it certainly provides data that may be employed by any future historian of the field of the psychology of religion, of psychology in general, of the sciences of religion (*Religionswissenschaften*) or even of something called “religious studies” in the United States. Equally, the volume does not present a specimen of psychological research on any form of religion, which would be the core and kernel of the psychology of religion itself. Obviously, however, the following chapters could, under some conditions, be used in that way. To some approaches within psychology at large, autobiographical types of research are the preferred ground to obtain answers to their questions. A great number of empirical techniques are being utilized to gather and to analyze empirical data of all kinds, but most types of interviews and many kinds of questionnaires all draw on data that are autobiographical and generally historical in nature. Entire fields such as narrative psychology usually proceed by employing (auto)biographical texts, whether produced on

behalf of and at the request of researchers, or for other purposes (see, e.g., Bauer, McAdams, & Sakaeda, 2005; Bittner, 2006; Markowitsch & Welzer, 2010; McAdams, 1985, 1993; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006; Singer & Bluck, 2001). In one way or another, any of the following chapters could be employed in that way too; it all depends on the kind of question with which a future researcher will turn to any of the texts in this collection. With respect to the triad historical–systematical–empirical, however, the emphasis of the present volume is on the first components: not offering systematic historiography in itself, it does aim to offer data on the history of the psychology of religion. And although the provision of empirical data has been one of the goals of our enterprise, this has not been and could not have been without systematic points of view. One may well quarrel about the adequacy of these points of view. It would be totally inadequate, however, to pretend to have been proceeding without such theoretical a priori. As these have been influential in the way this collection has come about, I should at least mention some of them, even if in an historicizing way, for a moment.

Here I should just point out that the collection has more in common with historical projects in other human sciences than with the employment of autobiographical procedures in empirical psychological research. In general, it is probably true that among disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences, psychology has become the least historically oriented and inclined. This is somewhat surprising, especially in the psychology of religion field, as the employment of (auto)biographical data has been very prominent at the outset of this psychological subdiscipline: early pioneers including Freud, James, and Starbuck drew heavily on (auto)biographical material and even proponents of the first “experiments” in the psychology of religion, such as Stählin, strongly favored autobiographically based approaches (Belzen, 2012). Today, awareness of the history of their field has largely been marginalized among psychologists (and consequently among psychologists of religion), and volumes with titles such as *A History of Psychology in Autobiography* (see, e.g., Lindzey, 1989; Lindzey & Runyan, 2007; Lück, 2004; Mos, 2009; Pongratz, Traxel, & Wehner, 1972; Pongratz & Wehner, 1979; Wehner, 1992) have become rare exceptions in the field of psychology at large. Yet they have served as examples of the kind of work offered in this volume, as have some projects in neighboring fields; see Lachmann and Rupp (1989a, 1989b, 2000).

It is amazing in a way that even among psychologists of religion, who because of their professional relationships to theologians, philosophers, and scholars of religion tended to be a rather theoretically inclined group, autobiographical reflections have become exceptions too: there isn't much of substance between Starbuck (1937) and Faber (1993). This is probably the consequence of their trying to keep up with the so-called mainstream in contemporary psychology. There are not many psychologists who publish “glimpses into their own black box,” even of a “self-deconstructive” nature, as the anthropologist George W. Stocking (2010) recently did; of course, there are exceptions; see Hermans (2012) for an example of an autobiography by a well-known present-day psychologist.

Primarily historically oriented as this project is, like all scholarship it ultimately aims at such fundamental issues as have been hinted at in the beginning of this

introduction, and in the way it has been executed it has not been without systematics, even if these mirror the assumptions and preferences of the editor, and are largely determined by his path into the psychology of religion. Intellectual integrity requires they should be brought, at least to some extent, into the open.

## The History of this Volume

Some brief words on my own history in the field of the psychology of religion will probably be helpful in understanding the rationale for organizing this volume and the selection I arrived at for its composition. When I entered university in the 1970s I had a vague interest in philosophy (a subject I did not really know about) and an equally vague intention of becoming an historian. A friend who had been attending lectures on psychoanalysis enthusiastically recommended that I enroll in a psychology program, which I did, again with a vague idea of becoming a clinician. A world opened itself up to me, but not so much the world of human beings and their subjectivity, about which I heard a great deal more during my studies in philosophy and history. Attracted to the kind of academic freedom as it still seemed to exist at a Dutch university in the 1970s, I opted for an academic career, all the while becoming convinced that such would be easier in the ever-expanding field of psychology than in the other subjects I was pursuing. (And indeed, my first salaried job at a university was for teaching the experiment and other research methods to psychology students).

Needing to specialize within psychology, I had chosen cultural psychology, primarily because of its theoretical and interdisciplinary character. At my university a section of the department for cultural psychology was involved in research on religion, and this was where I first got involved in formally funded research projects. (Before, I had never even heard about the psychology of religion.) Again, worlds opened themselves up to me, this time the worlds of religions, of theology, of the scientific study of religion, of very diverse (and not necessarily religious) spiritualities. It was all fascinating enough for me to acquire a full training in the sciences of religion too. When I was invited to a chair professorship in the psychology of religion at the University of Amsterdam, I tried to pursue this subject along cultural psychological and hermeneutical lines in general (Belzen, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2010; Belzen & Geels, 2003), all the while remaining interested in the history and theory of that very field (Belzen, 1991, 2000, 2007, 2009; Belzen & Kugelmann, 2009). When I had first encountered the psychology of religion in the early 1980s, there was, except for some masterpieces such as Vergote (1978/1988), next to nothing in general in or on that field available except some articles and reviews of older literature. Especially in Europe the field was so limited in size and number of practitioners that it seemed possible to get acquainted with almost everyone personally. In order to deepen my overview of the subdiscipline, I developed the idea of interviewing the key players to discover and understand how they had made their way into this discipline, how they defined and outlined the field, and why and how they themselves were involved.

Along with but apart from the kind of work I was hired to do, I started to correspond and to have conversations with people including Antoine Vergote in Belgium, Heije Faber in The Netherlands, Paul Pruyser in the United States, and Hjalmar Sundén in Sweden, people who may really be considered to have been refounding the psychology of religion since the late 1950s.

Simultaneously and surprisingly, the field started to grow and to get organized. A first major event, in my memory, was the publication of *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach* by Spilka, Hood, and Gorsuch (1985), conceived along the lines and written in the style of a contemporary, increasingly quantitatively oriented psychology. All of a sudden, the few psychologists of religion in Europe at that time had the exciting feeling that we were, indeed, a part of that psychology as a whole! Only a few years later, Wulff (1991) published his impressive overview of theories in and lasting contributions made to the field during psychology's past, showing that religion had been a major issue to many, if not all, of the founding fathers of psychology at large. Soon after, from disciplines neighboring on the psychology of religion, authors such as Browning (1988) and Vandermeersch (1974/1991) started to point out the extent to which theories in psychology were linked to religious and philosophical notions, to be followed only a little later by numerous practically oriented works that convincingly argued that attention to religious issues would be a requirement in psychotherapy and other domains of mental health care (e.g., Bhugra, 1996; Brown, 1994; Grzymala-Moszczyńska & Beit-Hallahmi, 1996; Kimble, McFadden, Ellor, & Seeber, 1995; Loewenthal, 1995; Pargament, 1997; Schumaker, 1992).

Serving as I was on an increasingly international scale, I discovered how extensive yet largely disorganized and, especially, how heterogeneous the psychology of religion really is. Because of its professional relationships to large and established fields outside psychology (such as theology and religious studies, social sciences, history of religions, and others) and because of the involvement of people from disciplines including psychiatry, pedagogy, psychoanalysis, and others, it is probably indeed more heterogeneous than its mother discipline (psychology). Numerous as are and have been the efforts to do research on "religion" (a better phrasing would be: on "a variety of phenomena called religious within a certain culture") from a psychological perspective (better: "from the perspectives of one of the many theories called psychology"; I shall refrain here and now from using these more adequate but very clumsy circumscriptions; for an explanation, see Belzen, 2010), I don't think that there is anyone at present with an overview of "the" psychology of religion: there are an ever-increasing number of people who in some way try to apply one psychological viewpoint or another to any kind of religious functioning whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> Neither do I think it would be possible to write any history of "the" psychology of religion: the contributions to this field are too various and too dependent on their diverse contexts (such as the disciplines within which these contributions were developed, the countries in which they lived or received their training, the biographies

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<sup>1</sup>Which, in my humble understanding, would be a good circumscription of what psychology of religion "is." As is made clear, however, it would not accord with my intuitions to define, once and for all, what psychology of religion "is." It is wiser to let a thousand flowers bloom.

of the authors, and more besides). After Wulff's excellent overview of some of the best-known theories, I would as an historian plead for in-depth empirical investigation and analysis of selected contributions from a variety of perspectives (Belzen, 1991, 2000, 2007; Huxel, 2000; Klünker, 1985).

If ever I had the intention of turning my getting acquainted with some key players in the psychology of religion into a publishable project, it was transformed by a number of factors, among which the most important have included (1) the death of some of the key players with whom I had come into contact (such as Paul Pruyser or André Godin), (2) my increasing interest in autobiographical data and perspectives in psychological research (Belzen, 2004; Belzen & Geels, 2008). Therefore, at some point, I decided it would be better (and more manageable) to have some of these key players tell their own stories about their involvement in "the" psychology of religion than racing against time and trying to get standardized interviews with a number of them. And (3) another not unimportant consideration was that it is far more enjoyable for any reader to have access to personal, first-hand stories than to read any analysis of such stories or interview transcriptions.

I decided therefore to continue to contact, visit, and correspond with my senior colleagues, but now also to talk them into, coach, and facilitate them in writing up versions of their stories as psychologists of religion. I discussed a number of questions with all of them,<sup>2</sup> leaving them free, of course, to handle them as they desired. As becomes apparent from the following chapters, some addressed some of them

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<sup>2</sup> These were questions such as: Would you please provide some information on your personal background? (Obviously, an account of your educational and professional training will be most illuminating for the understanding of your work, your position, and your views as a scholar.) What turned you into a psychologist of religion? How, where, and when did you first encounter the discipline (even if only the word)? What did psychology of religion look like when you first encountered it or when you first got involved? How did the field develop during your period of time in it? Did you have any teachers or mentors or models in this field? Who were they, and what has been their influence on your work? Did collaboration with anyone influence your work? How would you define psychology, religion, and psychology of religion? How do you see its relationships to other sciences of religion, to the psychological sciences (including, of course, psychoanalysis and psychiatry), to psychotherapy and counseling, to theology and ministry, and to any other field you may wish to include. (If you enter into a subject like this at all.) What place did this subdiscipline hold in the whole of your life/career/work? (Perhaps it was less central than your inclusion in this volume suggests? If so, no problem at all!) Is there a relationship between your work in the psychology of religion and your other professional work? Is there such a relationship between your psychology of religion and your views of life, of the world, of the human being? (*Lebensanschauung*, *Weltanschauung*, *Menschanschauung*) Is there a relationship between your religious views and your work in the psychology of religion? Has there been a relationship between important life events and your work in or views of the psychology of religion? Have there been any conflicts that influenced your work? (Or did you run into conflicts because of your work or interest in the psychology of religion?) What have been your biggest problems in or with the field? What has been your major contribution to the psychology of religion? What has been your greatest disappointment in or with the field? How would you evaluate the psychology of religion: the idea in general, its achievements, and its development? (I tend to differentiate here between psychology as a science, a discipline, and a profession, but you should do as you like.) What are your expectations and hopes for the field? Any pieces of advice you would like to give present practitioners or to people who might want to become one?

and some neglected them entirely in their account. (Both procedures were fine with me.) Some wanted to have some examples (or even wanted to see texts written by others first); others preferred to write in splendid isolation. (Both ways were fine with me.) All of these colleagues being accomplished authors, I obviously left it to them to delve into history, whether their own or that of “the” field, to develop or defend their own stand, or whatever. As all of the contributors to this project are or have been major figures in the psychology in religion, there certainly was more good in letting them talk themselves than having me telling or molding their stories. (It is inevitable that this project and its editor have to some extent been influential in the conception and phrasing of the stories that make up the corpus of this book. It would be pointless to try to deny or disguise this. It is better to be as open as possible about such influences – as I am trying to be in this introduction – than to try to downplay them. But it also means that each author could possibly provide us with another version of her or his story than the one published here. No one is to be identified with a single story; Belzen, 2004).

Although each of the following chapters has been conceived and penned in interaction with me (to varying degrees of intensity: either in the form of conversations, formal interviews, or (email) correspondence), only the final editing of the contributions by Faber, Scharfenberg, and Sundén has been entirely in my hands. I took care, with the help of linguistic experts, of the translation of these texts as well. The chapter by Grom has also been translated.

## Some of the Criteria in Organizing this Volume

In selecting whom to include in the collection of documents for this book, I have first of all tried to make sure to obtain contributions from such people as may be considered to have been involved in refounding the psychology of religion. This means that quite a number of present leaders, as indicated by their high-ranking publications, their affiliations with Division 36 (“psychology of religion”) of the American Psychological Association or other organizations, their serving as editors of journals or of handbooks, are not present in this collection.<sup>3</sup> Obviously, this does *not* mean they would be unimportant or less important than the ones the reader will encounter here; on the contrary, they are people who are active at the moment of publication of this volume, they are people from whom we may still expect important contributions. (And the other way round: no one should think the authors in this volume have left the field, will not make any contributions, already belong purely to the past, etc. None of the criteria I have been trying to apply warrants any rigidity.) Clearly, however, the emphasis is on leaders in the recent past.

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<sup>3</sup>To give some obvious, though randomly selected examples, in alphabetical order: Josef Corveleyn, James J. Jones, Raymond Paloutzian, Kenneth Pargament, Ralph Piedmont, Lewis Rambo, Vassilis Saroglou, Edward Shafranske, and Fraser Watts.



I strove to include such people who have made contributions to the psychology of religion on the level of content itself, not so much those who were primarily involved in organizing the field, important as the latter is. (As will be clear, if someone has a brilliant idea, but no one else gets to know about it, not much will be added to the development of any scholarly discipline.)

There is one thing probably more important to make explicit: personal friendship has not been a criterion in including or not including anybody in the following collection. With some of the present authors I maintain cordial collegial relationships; some of them I count among my friends; some people not included in the volume belong to colleagues with whom I am most friendly. Moreover, and somewhat to my surprise, there have even been some friends among the colleagues who refused, for whatever reason, to be included in this volume or who never finished their text. (For obvious reasons, I do not reveal names or reasons mentioned.<sup>4</sup>)

I tried to be balanced in the proportion of female and male contributors. There being only two female authors in this collection may even be misrepresentative, however: the ratio between female and male authors, especially among the refounders of the present field, is probably not quite the 2:13 it is in this volume. Only very recently have a higher number of women risen to prominence in the psychology of religion.

An effort has been made to represent fairly the religious traditions from which most psychologists of religion come: Jews, both liberal and orthodox; Catholics, both lay persons and priests, both secular and regular; Protestants, from mainstream traditions as well as from Free Church traditions; and those who are no longer or never have been affiliated with any religious denomination. I have left it to individual authors to reveal something about their denominational backgrounds, I am not going to tell here who belongs or belonged to what tradition, although it did play a role in my selection of colleagues to be included. I think that Jews, Catholics, and Protestants are correctly represented: they are the only traditions investigated by psychologists to any extent, and most colleagues belong to or have belonged to one of these traditions. (Had there been a significant amount of research on Islam, Hindu, or atheistic traditions, I would naturally have tried to include a colleague from that tradition too. Sometimes I also failed to attract someone to represent a particular religious tradition.)

I strove for balance by including people from very different wings within psychology at large: not only did I include colleagues working in the hermeneutical tradition within psychology, but also champions of a positivist approach, not only

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<sup>4</sup>Naturally, not everyone will only feel honored, flattered, or anything of the sort by inclusion in a volume like this. Here is an anecdote to illustrate this: when Erwin Roth (1926–1998), a well-known German–Austrian psychologist, entered his institute one day with a grumpy face, his collaborators asked what was the matter. His reply: “Ah, Wehner has requested a chapter from me for his *Psychology: Autobiographical Accounts* – now I know I am growing old...” Others, however, may become motivated to dive deeper into their own past, as has been the case with Heije Faber, who was inspired by our conversations–interviews to write and publish an entire autobiography (Faber, 1993).

theoreticians, but also clinicians. In addition to psychologists, I included people who had their formal training or institutional affiliation in fields such as theology or in religious studies; and I made sure to include representatives of the substantial psychoanalytic tradition within the psychology of religion.

A criterion that has deliberately not been employed in a quantitatively representative way is the balance between contributions from the United States and from Europe. As indicated, when I ran into the psychology of religion at the beginning of the 1980s, there was, except for APA's Division 36, almost nothing in the way of organization or formal presentation of the field. Although there were some highly interesting people in Europe doing psychology of religion, in whatever sense, in the United States psychological interest in religion was largely of a pastoral nature, or was making an effort to integrate psychological (usually clinical psychological) and religious (usually Christian) viewpoints.<sup>5</sup> We in Europe had taken notice of the empirical work of some American researchers such as Hood or Spilka, but the work by Europeans had remained largely unknown in the United States, not least because of the language barrier. Although the number of people involved in the psychology of religion has since increased far more strongly in the United States than in Europe (where resentment of religion among psychologists, even if only as an object of research, still largely needs to be overcome), I nevertheless decided to have the European contributors overrepresented, not only because the reception of their works has been suffering far more from the language barrier than the American contributions, but also because their work usually tended to be more theoretically profound than much of the recent, often empiricist work coming from the United States. And the inclusion of someone such as Pavel Říčan from the Czech Republic is informative to American and European readers alike: in former Western Europe too we hardly knew anything about what was going on behind the Iron Curtain during the Communist reign in Eastern Europe.

## **Introducing the Contributors to this Volume**

However careful or at least thoughtful (in my opinion) the selection of authors for this volume may have been, the choices made may in the end always remain controversial to some critics. Let them feel free to organize another, perhaps better, volume and let me finish this modest introduction by providing some information about

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<sup>5</sup> Valuable as such enterprises are in their own right, psychologists of religion usually try to proceed with more detachment from any religious interest. Some of the authors in this collection, such as the European Heye Faber or the American Newton Malony, clearly only developed into psychologists of religion after having become pastoral psychologists. Bear in mind: this is not to say that psychology of religion is better, more interesting, or in any way superior to pastoral psychology or other combinations of psychology and religion. Yet, the distinction between psychology of religion as a research-oriented part of the multiple psychologies we know today and other types of psychological involvement with religion, however understood, is important in understanding both the strengths and limitation of each of these types.

each of the authors of the following chapters, explaining why they were included. (To avoid any false categorization, I simply list them alphabetically.)

Mario Aletti (\*1946) trained as a psychologist and a psychoanalyst. He has been the founder and first president of the Italian Society for the Psychology of Religion. (Founded in 1995, this is probably the only national formal psychological society of this kind worldwide.) Along with being a psychoanalyst in private practice, he teaches at one of the universities of Milan in Italy. A prolific author in Italian, Aletti's publications have barely become known outside his own country. He has been serving as a member of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion.

Donald Capps (\*1939) is probably one of the best representatives of authors in the field of the psychology of religion who did not graduate as a psychologist, but earned their credits in the field of theology. Capps, now emeritus from Princeton Theological Seminary, developed into a psychologist of religion with a profound grasp of psychoanalysis, and over the years he published an amazingly large number of psychological studies on a great number of topics. His credentials are beyond any doubt, as is also testified by his being past president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and a past editor of its prestigious *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

Heije Faber (1907–2001) initially trained as a systematic theologian (also studying in Germany with renowned scholars Heidegger, Otto, Bultmann, and Heiler). He served as a pastor, and then proceeded to obtain training (including a second doctorate) in psychology. When in the 1960s almost all Roman Catholic theological faculties in the Netherlands decided to include some kind of psychology in their curriculum, he became the first full professor for psychology of religion at a Dutch theological faculty. He has been very instrumental in introducing American pastoral psychology not only to his own country, but also to Germany and the rest of Europe. He has probably been the most published Dutch colleague, in The Netherlands and beyond.

Although his professional affiliation has never been with an institute of psychology, Bernhard Grom (\*1936) is possibly the German colleague best acquainted with international psychological research on religion. He certainly has come up with one of the most original contributions to this field in Germany's recent past: he is one of the few authors to have published an impressive approach of his own, which has been operationalized and employed in a number of empirical investigations. Although his *opus magnum* has been translated into other European languages, it is not yet available in English.

Nils G. Holm (\*1943), an emeritus professor of the sciences of religion at Åbo Akademi University in Turku (Finland), has developed into a leading Scandinavian psychologist of religion, serving as president of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion and also as an editor of its journal *Archiv für Religionspsychologie* (Archive for the Psychology of Religion). His *Introduction to the Psychology of Religion* (originally in Swedish, 1987) has been translated into several languages, and he received the Bier Award of Division 36 of the American Psychological Association.

Ralph W. Hood (\*1942), a professor of psychology at the University of Chattanooga (Tennessee, United States), is an extremely productive author and a

world authority on the empirical study of mysticism. He is the coauthor of the best seller *Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach* (now in its fourth edition), and was cofounder and coeditor of *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. He has been serving as editor of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, has been a member of the board of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion, and coeditor of its journal *Archiv für Religionspsychologie* (Archive for the Psychology of Religion).

Kate M. Loewenthal (\*1941), an English psychologist from Royal Holloway (University of London, United Kingdom), had such a reputation teaching psychology of religion that she was granted a personal professorship in the subject. She has become a well-known author of several textbooks in the discipline, and is a cofounder and coeditor of the journal *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*.

H. Newton Malony (\*1931) has been a professor at the Graduate School of Psychology (Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, United States). Internationally renowned, he is at home in both psychology and theology (especially pastoral care), has been a prolific author, and a cofounder and coeditor of *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*.

Pavel Říčan (\*1933) has been a director of the Institute of Psychology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science. He has also taught psychology of religion at several theological institutions in the Czech Republic. After the breakdown of communism in Eastern Europe, he became one of the principal researchers in the psychology of religion there.

After having been a professor of psychology in her native Argentina, Ana-María Rizzuto (\*1932) served as a clinical professor in psychiatry at Tufts University Medical School until 1991. She has been a psychoanalyst in private practice in Boston (Massachusetts, United States) and a training and supervising analyst at the Psychoanalytic Institute of New England, East. Her study *The Birth of the Living God* (1979) gained her international fame and is already considered a classic in the field. For her work in the psychology of religion she received the Bier Award, given by the American Psychological Association, and the Oskar Pfister Prize, given by the American Psychiatric Association.

Joachim Scharfenberg (1927–1996), who was trained in medicine, psychology, and theology, was a professor of pastoral theology in Kiel (Germany) and a psychoanalyst in private practice. He was a prominent, even if isolated, figure in German psychology of religion after the Second World War, and he became the founder of the “movement for pastoral psychology” in his country. Some of his books have been translated into English.

Bernard Spilka (\*1926), an emeritus professor of psychology at the University of Denver (Colorado, United States), has grown into a psychologist of religion of repute working strictly in the quantitative-empirical tradition. Widely published, he is the coauthor of the best-seller, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach* (now in its fourth edition).

Trained as an historian of religion, Hjalmar Sundén (1908–1993) first functioned as a pastor and later as a teacher at a college. Publishing as an independent scholar, he was granted the first full professorship in the psychology of religion in Sweden

(at Uppsala University) and he became the inspiration for Scandinavian psychology of religion after the Second World War. He formulated his own “role theory of religion” and founded his own “school.” Internationally respected, quite a number of his works have been translated into German.

After graduation from Leuven University (Belgium) in both philosophy and theology, Antoine Vergote (\*1921) went for training in psychoanalysis and other human sciences to Paris (where he studied with celebrities such as Lacan, Piaget, Merleau-Ponty, and Lévi-Strauss). He founded research centers for the psychology of religion at the universities of both Leuven (in Dutch) and Louvain-la-neuve (in French). Attracting a large number of foreign students, he developed into the internationally best-known European psychologist of religion. Prolific in a number of different fields, many of his works have been translated into several languages (including English).

David M. Wulff (\*1940) is a professor of psychology at Wheaton College (Norton, Massachusetts, United States) and the author of the acknowledged theoretical textbook *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary*, which has been translated into several languages. He has been functioning as book review editor of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, and as coeditor of the *Archiv für Religionspsychologie* (Archive for the Psychology of Religion).

## Final Words

A last misunderstanding that should not be allowed to arise from the publication of this volume, is that the intention would be to launch something like a promotion for the psychology of religion or to naively sing its praises.<sup>6</sup> As has been previously indicated: any evaluation of the psychology of religion in its past and present form is left to the readers themselves, who should, if they really want to come up with a sound judgment, turn to the works being published by the authors in this volume as well as by other contemporary participants in the field. Such evaluation will also be likely to depend on opinions one holds quite independently of the actual achievements within the psychology of religion: here again, attitudes towards religion, towards psychology, and towards scholarly research on (forms of) religion will play an important role. One such opinion could be that the psychology of religion is relevant because religion is such an important domain of human culture and of human lives.

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<sup>6</sup>As will be clear a priori, getting to know the psychology of religion will not necessarily lead to a positive evaluation. (The existence of something does not necessarily require that it be praised; take criminality, for example.) A critic might, for instance, well suggest that the re-emergence of the psychology of religion is mainly an artifact of psychology’s continuing spectacular quantitative growth in recent decades. It will have to be left to real historical scholarship to come up with a settled opinion.

Whether one likes anything religious or not, it can't be denied that religions, in whatever way defined, have been and continue to be an important force in almost all that involves human beings for better or for worse; it is not for psychologists to pass judgment on that. If psychology turns to fields such as labor, organization, war, education, management, art, health and health care, politics, law, traffic, and what have you, then surely religion is another domain worthy of exploration. It is for this reason, probably, that almost all the founding fathers of psychology devoted attention to religion. (And not because all of them would have been religious themselves or because their evaluation of religion would have been positive. In the same way, not all contemporary psychologists of religion are fond of all that goes under the label "religious.") Religion being so important, its scholarly exploration and analysis is important too, and among the sciences of religion, psychology must be deemed to be of prime importance, as religion is a human enterprise: found among humans only and characteristic of the human being, it cannot and would not exist without human beings. (But one should bear in mind: this does not imply that the human being as such would be necessarily religious or that all human beings would be religious!)

Indispensable as psychology is to the sciences of religion, to psychology as an academic discipline religion is far less central. Obviously, the very diverse types of psychology proceed from all kinds of assumptions that include religious aspects too, and therefore within theoretical psychology a broader discussion of the relationships between religion and psychology would be more than appropriate (Johnson & Jones, 2000; Miller & Delaney, 2005; see also a special issue such as volume 29/2 of the *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*, 2009). Such an elucidation, however, is not what the psychology of religion itself aims at: the latter tries to analyze religious phenomena from a variety of psychological perspectives. But not all kinds of psychological theories or perspectives need necessarily be applied in research on religion. Eventually, and the more embracing any kind of psychology becomes, it will also be logical to say something about religion, as one of the human being's specifics. But one may well be an excellent psychologist without ever having given a single professional thought to religion. To psychology, therefore, religion may be considered a marginal field, an assertion that does not at all explain the strange history of psychological research on religion. That history clearly was not shaped by encyclopedic or otherwise systematic considerations, but by forces including fashion, market, personal preoccupations, and many others sometimes referred to as "external."

Be this as it may, and as explained before: it is not the goal of this volume to analyze the history of the re-emergence of the psychology of religion. Rather, it aims to provide information about the central agents in this process, about their intentions, opinions, about how they perceive their way into, their contributions to, and their evaluations of, that field called the psychology of religion. The goal has been to do this by way of providing first-hand information, not to have observers (such as historians or theoreticians), no matter to what extent they themselves are involved in research, but by letting the key players comment themselves, whether speaking to an interviewer or writing an original text all by themselves.

The authors of the following chapters have been central to the re-emergence of what has now again become a well-established discipline, with theory and research,

scholarly infrastructure, and an increasing number of participants and publications. Times have rapidly changed: when our authors set out, there was almost no possibility to qualify and to function as a psychologist of religion; because of the antipathy to religion among many postwar psychologists, it was hardly possible to publish work in this field or to find funding for research. The contributors to this volume have nevertheless managed to do all this, often working as psychologists of religion, “in splendid isolation.” As well as their theoretical and practical contributions to this subdiscipline of psychology and of the sciences of religion alike, their courage and persistence need to be appreciated: only people involved themselves for several decades in any enterprise can understand how much strength and stamina has been required to do so. (And bear in mind: almost none of them ever had a formal appointment as a psychologist of religion, and even to those who had a formal obligation to do at least some teaching in this field, such obligation came late in life.) Without exception, our authors have been pioneers to whom the present practitioners of the discipline owe a great deal. Listening to what these giants – at their advanced age probably wiser than most of their younger colleagues – have to say will be instructive to all present practitioners and to anyone else who wants to learn about the comeback of the psychology of religion.

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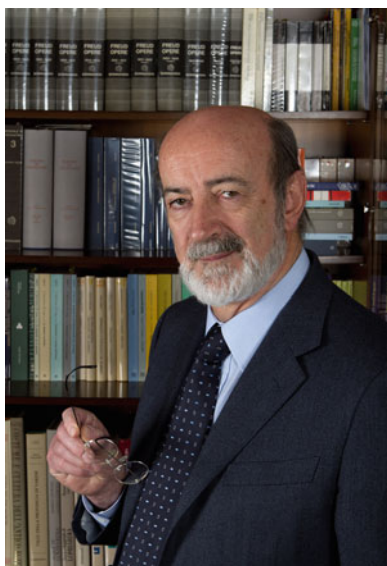


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## Chapter 2

# My Concern with Psychology of Religion: Defending Psychology, Respecting Religion

Mario Aletti



### When I Say God . . .

If I look back at the last 40 years of my involvement with psychology of religion, I can see various connections with other areas of interest in life. My involvement in this field is bound up with other events related to my own personal life and the development of my career as a psychologist and psychoanalyst. In a sense, my

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M. Aletti (✉)  
Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica, Milano, Italy  
emai: mario.aletti@gmail.com

work on psychology of religion has been interconnected with the development of the discipline in Italy (Aletti, 1992a) and, in a small way, in the world. I am aware that an autobiography is by necessity a reconstruction and a product of a personal narrative, where particular memories, phases, and turning points are selected from a very subjective perspective and therefore conditioned by various conscious and unconscious factors. Seen in this way, an autobiography is more a narrative of one's own formation than a compilation of events, but perhaps the sharing of an old man's experiences within a particular discipline will prove more useful to the younger generation than a list of publications, which could in any case be found elsewhere.

The beginning of my interest in the psychology of religion is connected with a specific event. Towards the end of the 1960s, I was still a young university student in the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy in Milan. At the same time I was working as an educator in a special center for the rehabilitation of adolescents who had been in trouble with the law and sent there by the local courts.

It was the custom at the beginning of the day for a Catholic priest to give a talk on a religious subject to all the youngsters assembled in church. One morning the priest, wishing to make the point that God loves everyone, said, "God loves us all, like a Father." The ensuing silence was loudly interrupted by one of the youngsters, "Nonsense! All nonsense! My father beat my mother to death. Now he takes my sister onto the streets every day and pimps her. He does not want me at home. . . . If this is your God, you can keep him!" Everyone was astonished. The reply given by the priest and by the other educators was, up to a certain point, in line with normal religious pedagogy. Religious language about God is a symbolic and anthropomorphic language. The concept of God as Father does not refer to a real father but to the symbolic meaning of a father, and so on.

Even for me, it was not difficult to find a justification because of the cultural paradigms of the university studies I was doing on pedagogy, philosophy of language, and applied linguistics. But the episode, in its immediacy, rather dramatically raised a question about religious experience and the religious language through which it expresses itself. The case of the young lad – whose name was Roberto – raised a question that was not only pedagogical and catechetical, but basically, gnoseological and epistemological: when someone says God, what is it that one is really saying?

This question was the starting point of my interest in the psychology of religion and remains even now a fixed point in my view, guiding me in my conjectures and research.

When someone, for instance, says, "God our Father," what is it that he is referring to, who is it that is speaking inside him? I became aware that what was required was an analysis of the psyche and of its functioning and, on the other hand, an examination of the relationship between the (religious) language and the "lived" experience to which the language refers. It would also be necessary to consider the theological problem of the correspondence between the language about God and the reality of God.

## Different Approaches

In those days I was attending the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy at the Università Cattolica of Milan. I developed a great interest in the studies of Ernst Cassirer on the philosophy of symbolic forms and in the linguistic structuralism of Ferdinand De Saussure.

Cassirer offered a re-evaluation of the symbol, which was seen not only as a fortuitously occurring ornamental/aesthetic decoration for thought, but as an essential and necessary organ for the same thought. The human person, understood not only as *animal rationale* but also as *animal symbolicum*, is capable of a language based on symbol which enables the distancing of the immediate impression of the senses from emotion and activates the possibility of cultural communication and construction. What impressed me about De Saussure was his insistence on distinguishing between *langue*, understood as a system of signs in a language, and *parole*, that is, the linguistic act of the speaker, a unique expression of his cultured individuality.

In these authors I saw the possibility of the end of gnoseological realism which, following St. Thomas, expected knowledge to be *adequatio intellectus et rei*.

The objection of that young lad about God's "paternity" and the theoretical and educational implications of it continued to haunt me. My intuition was that the theme of the relationship between religious language and "lived" religion would be an interesting subject for my doctoral dissertation. Narrowing the field from the gnoseological and the linguistic to the psychological and trying to formulate a question that could be worked out empirically, I began to ask myself what concept of God as father those young people could have, particularly those with whom I was working, and who had undergone a negative and sometimes tragic experience of their own father. How could the experience of an earthly father and access to the symbolism of language intertwine in the experience of the believer who is taught that he is the son of a heavenly father?

I spoke to the Director of the Institute of Psychology of the Cattolica, a priest, Don Giorgio Zunini. Head of the Department of General Psychology, as a young man he had been trained as a biologist. He was well known for his research on animal psychology. As he was approaching the end of his university career, he had gathered into a single volume (1966) a collection of studies on psychology of religion, later translated into English as *Man and His Religion. Aspects of Religious Psychology* (Zunini, 1966/1969).

Zunini listened to my request with interest and encouraged me to continue researching. However, being close to retirement, he put me in touch with one of his associates, also a priest. The latter, who taught applied psychology, refused to give me any help on the grounds that psychology of religion was not a worthy academic discipline, as it was not based on empirical research. I thus ended up working on my thesis all by myself, but the challenge thrown down by the assistant who did not think that psychology of religion could ever be scientific had fired my determination and made me more focused on my topic. I decided to start with a critical analysis of the empirical research on the religious behavior of adolescents that was available

internationally, in order to assess its methodological validity and scientific rigor. I believe that this initial, apparently unimportant, episode was actually highly significant: it foreshadowed the constant battle to come with the university authorities for the recognition of psychology of religion as a specific discipline among the other psychological disciplines.

In those two whole years of research for my thesis, the only encouragement I received from my university was, ultimately, Zunini's approval. It was from his hands that in 1972 I received the doctoral diploma and colors after an unusually long defense, which was due to the considerable interest that this "strange" new discipline of psychology of religion had aroused in the examiners' board.

## **Formation and Mentors**

Researching for texts for my thesis was not an easy task. Although not completely unheard of, psychology of religion was scarcely known in Italy. With the exception of the few pontifical universities in Rome, no university held any courses on the subject. These universities were in those days almost exclusively dedicated to the training of the clergy, particularly future lecturers in theology, philosophy, and canon law; there are no other theological or religious studies faculties within state universities in Italy. Psychology of religion was completely unheard of at my university, the Cattolica of Milan. This was in line with an early position taken long before by the founder of the Cattolica, the Franciscan Father Agostino Gemelli. In those days, there were no books in Italian on the subject and those in other languages were not available in my city. I had to embark on a long series of travels to Italy's better-stocked libraries and take on the difficult task of seeking photocopies from European and American universities.

In Italy, the only library with a good collection of relevant books and periodicals was the Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano (now the Pontifical Salesian University). This university had a Faculty of Educational Sciences offering a degree course with a psychological approach. The degree was widely respected and was valued both because of the syllabus and because there were no other faculties of psychology in Italy until 1971. It also enjoyed state recognition for professional purposes. It was in fact at the Ateneo Salesiano that in 1958, Professor Pier Giovanni Grasso had introduced the first academic course in Italy in religious psychology. In 1965, this course was taken over by one of his students, Professor Giancarlo Milanese. I went to Rome for the sole purpose of discussing my thesis with Milanese.

The professor received me with great kindness and generosity. He gave me valuable advice on content and bibliography. With his backing, I obtained free access to the library, even during the summer break. I spent two whole quiet months in the library vaults, consulting books, writing, and photocopying. That summer marked the beginning for me of a period of intense study and enthusiasm that was to last for 3 years and which took me beyond the specific scope of my thesis. I read several classic authors in the field of psychology of religion, such as T. Flournoy, W. James (who at

that time puzzled me on account of a certain tautology in his definition of what can be considered sacred), J. H. Leuba, R. Otto, R. H. Thouless, and M. Eliade. I also became interested in more recent authors, such as E. Fromm, G. W. Allport, V. Frankl, W. H. Clark, and J. Nuttin. I developed a keen interest in the works of Freud on religion, even though at that time not all of them were available in an official standardized Italian translation, and devoted considerable time and energy to reading them. On the other hand, patient but unenthusiastic reading of Jung left me perplexed and gave me an impression of esoteric haze. Besides, I perceived an epistemological and conceptual confusion which, even at that early stage, led me to reject Jungian psychology as an instrument for understanding psychology of religion.

At the Salesian University, the availability of books in the library and, better still, the possibility of discussing them with the faculty lecturers, almost all of them Salesian priests, was a boon. Although I was still a young student, Professor Milanesi's kind introduction meant that the lecturers welcomed me not only into their academic circles but also into their dining room, in typical "Salesian style," as this kind of hospitality is known in the Catholic Church. Their hospitality was complemented by a rigorous approach to study, which I still regard today as an ethical value. Each academic activity was expected to yield excellent results and to be pursued with the greatest commitment.

In 1970 I went to live in Rome, where I spent 3 years at the Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano. While collaborating with and later assisting Giancarlo Milanesi, I completed a Bachelor's degree course in theology at the same university. The simultaneous study of two different subjects, psychology and theology, would have a profound influence on my orientation and vision of psychology of religion.

The years of formation with Milanesi were also to have a great influence on me. From him I learned the clarity of the epistemological layout, the rigor of empirical research, and, last but not least, the importance of devoting time to one's students. My collaboration with him continued for 10 years after I left Rome. Our friendship lasted until his death in 1993. I see him as my first mentor, the man who introduced and guided me into the field.

My deepest cultural debt, however, is to Antoine Vergote, founder and, from 1958, director of the Centre de Psychologie de la Religion at the University of Louvain. In my opinion, he is to this day the most eminent figure in the field of the psychology of religion. During my first forays as a student in the study of psychology of religion, I found his book *Psychologie Religieuse*, published in 1966 and translated into Italian just a year later (Vergote, 1966/1967), to be of fundamental importance. This book gave psychology of religion the dignity of an autonomous psychological discipline. It stood out for the clarity of its epistemological approach and the way it defined the boundaries of the field and the limitations of psychological research. His deep understanding of the psychodynamic analysis of the religious attitude was supported not only by his vast knowledge of philosophical and theological anthropology (Vergote, 1974), but also by the vast and refined empirical analysis which he himself conducted. What gave further depth to his research into the conscious and unconscious processes of a person's attitude towards religion was his understanding of psychoanalysis as an effective clinical practice, and the critical

evaluation of Freud's thought, triggered by certain insights taken from Jacques Lacan. By viewing the outcome of religion in the context of a passageway from the imagery order to the symbolic order, Vergote showed the asymptotic nature of the same process and therefore the absurdity of psychology's claim to explain the origin and the ontological truth of religion. Vergote's epistemological choice of a methodological exclusion of the transcendent immediately appeared to me to be a continuation of a previous attempt, by Theodore Flournoy, to establish epistemological principles for the psychology of religion. I had discovered Flournoy by chance in the library of the Cattolica in a 1910 volume in which there was a collection of his most important articles published in the *Archives de Psychologie* and translated into Italian. Ever since then, these two authors have been a fundamental point of reference for me in my methodology in the psychology of religion.

During the academic year 1972–1973, while Milanese was in Germany for a year, the course in religious psychology at the PAS was entrusted to Professor André Godin, a Jesuit Father and director of the Centre Lumen Vitae de Psychologie Religieuse, who was already giving a course at the Gregorian University in Rome. As an associate of the chair for religious psychology, I had the opportunity of working with Godin and was responsible for translating his lecture notes from French into Italian. From Godin I learned to unite the rigor of psychological research with its possible pastoral application, without any overlapping or cross-contamination. The *Cahiers de Psychologie Religieuse*, for which he was responsible, and the first two works to be awarded the Prix Quinquennal "Lumen Vitae" de Psychologie Religieuse (those by Jean-Pierre Deconchy, 1967, and by Anne Dumoulin & Jean-Marie Jaspard, 1973, which were methodologically exemplary) were to me a further example of how rigorous empirical research in psychology of religion could and should be. Godin had great organizational abilities and knew how to inspire his collaborators to strive for the renewal of the Catholic Church and of catechesis, for which Vatican Council II had already paved the way.

As is well known, the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s was a time of great turmoil in universities all across the western world, an effect of the so-called "1968 revolution." Even at the pontifical universities in Rome there was a spirit of commitment and hope in Church renewal. Many priests and Catholic laypeople felt that the Church's message should be less tied to the political and economic powers and that the Church should become the "Church of the poor." In their proclamation of the Christian message, they tried to shift the emphasis to the meaning of religious language and to theological concepts such as the people of God, the sonship and paternity of God, collegiality, religious freedom, universal priesthood of the baptized, and so on.

At the Salesian University, as at the other pontifical universities, many lecturers and students (priests, clerics, and the few lay people), believed that pastoral action should not be limited to verbal proclamation but should also involve bearing witness. For some, a desire for fidelity to the Gospel teaching and to researching the meaning of the words they were proclaiming, led to their sharing their life with families and communities of squatters, which were quite numerous on the outskirts of Rome. For some academics, existential doubts and pastoral demands became a

further stimulus and raised more questions for their research. The question “which God to evangelize” hinted at the need for further research into what kind of God is understood by the faithful, how religious communication functions, and how this should be differentiated in terms of the context in which the announcement is being made. Or to put it more radically, what is religion, what is God, and what is the Church for believers? These themes would inspire not only general surveys but also a broadening of research into the specific fields of psychology of religion, psychology of communication, developmental psychology, social psychology, and so on.

Milanesi conducted a great deal of rigorous research in various Italian regions into the teaching of religion in schools, into the transition from a sacral family to a secular one, into the tensions among youth groups within the Church institutions, into the values held by youngsters and into their rapid development in those years of great ferment. I published a considerable amount in those years, most of which was related to the teaching of courses in psychology and sociology of religion held by Milanesi, and there is still a great deal of unpublished material in my bottom drawer, awaiting inclusion in a scientific biography which I hope one day to write.

As regards my occasional involvement in research, I tended to work on the purely psychological aspects, which interested me more than the surveys and the big sampling numbers of sociological investigation. In fact, I was slowly beginning to convince myself of the difficulty in finding proper instruments to measure accurately the psychology of the religious personality. Asking questions about a generic “religion” or belief in God (“Do you believe in God?”) seemed to me insufficient. I became convinced that psychology should concern itself with the study of the actual experience of psychic functioning, as opposed to historically and culturally determined religion, that which the believer encounters in his own environment. My conviction remains to this day and I refute the idea that one can equate religion and spirituality, transcendental religion and dedication to a set of values that Gordon Allport (1950) called absolute substitutes.

My search for valid instruments for empirical research entailed both the adaptation and the application of the tests and classical questionnaires that are found in the Anglo-American literature and the attempt to develop new ones. For the study of how notions about God – as taught by the Catholic Church – are acquired, I adopted the Piagetian semiclinical interview method. Basing my approach on the research by Vergote and his collaborators into the relationship between parental figures and God representations, I applied the semantic differential. I adopted an instrument based on verbal association similar to the one adopted by Deconchy, based on the model proposed by Osgood, Suci, and Tannebaum (1957). I had previously used this instrument, which was combined with an appropriately developed objective proof of religious knowledge (Aletti, 1990), on samples from various Italian regions over a number of years. This research made it possible for me to identify specific psychic functionings related to God representations among Italian Catholic youngsters, and the link between these modalities and the religious knowledge learned from the systemic teaching of religion. I published a synthesis of the results of this vast research (Aletti, 1992a), which was later summarized in English (Aletti, 1994a).



## A Psychology of Religion

The epistemological and methodological approach which, thanks to Flournoy and Vergote, both I and my thesis had assimilated, was fully shared by Milanese. It is reflected in his 1973 book *Psicologia della religione*, to which I also contributed.

Even in its title, the book highlighted an epistemological concern through a small but significant innovation in the terminology: not “Religious Psychology,” as the discipline was known at that time (it was still referred to as such both in Vergote’s book and in Milanese’s course description), but as “Psychology of Religion.” Psychology cannot be either religious or irreligious, and the study of the psychic processes of one’s adherence to religion does not mean accepting the belief of that religion. With its genitive preposition, “psychology of religion” is identified as a psychological discipline, not as a theological or pastoral one.

The book was the first Italian manual for this new discipline. It was published in three substantially identical editions (1973, 1974, 1977). A total of 9,000 copies were sold and it is considered *the* manual for the formation of generations of students and scholars, and a fundamental focal point for the few manuals that were published subsequently in Italy. It was also widely accepted at an international level and recommended by André Godin who, in a review in the journal *Lumen Vitae*, expressed the hope that it would be translated into French, English, and Spanish. As a matter of fact, the Spanish translation also had a very wide distribution in Latin America (Milanese & Aletti, 1974).

The manual’s epistemological approach exerted quite an influence. Psychology of religion was presented as an empirical-phenomenological discipline, based on observation and interpretation, and examines constants and variables of religious behavior according to the categories and models of psychological sciences. Religion was understood as an intentional relationship with that which the subject considers Transcendent, within a determined symbolic-linguistic system. The reference to the Transcendent shows a position that is distant from any attempt to make it overlap with the more generic term “spirituality,” as if it were a specific innate faculty within the psyche. Psychology of religion, as I understand it, answers the question, “When one says ‘God,’ what happens inside the psyche?” The reference is to what is presented about God by that particular culture and not to a generic spiritual “faculty” or an innate “religious sense” towards Nature or All. That being said, it is worth noting that the discipline does not study God, but belief in God. Basically, it is the methodological exclusion of the Transcendent, both as an object of investigation and as a factor for explaining religious behavior. The psychologist’s attitude has to be that of neutrality and abstention from judgment regarding the ontological reality of the objective pole of the believer’s faith. Neutrality means also holding a position of equidistance between reductive psychological attitudes and crypto-apologetic temptations.

The following example illustrates the kind of difficulties that the discipline had to face in those days. It also serves to explain the late arrival of psychology of religion in Italy. A particularly conservative ecclesiastic denounced our insistence on

proclaiming ourselves “neutral” on the question of God’s existence, and for this reason the book met some difficulty in obtaining the *nihil obstat* (or “no objection”) from the Church authorities. One has to keep in mind that in those days any book written by a priest, and Milanese was a priest, or published by a Catholic publishing house, like our publisher, had to be vetted by an ecclesiastical authority appointed by the local Bishop, which would declare *nihil obstat quominus imprimatur*. The L.D.C. (“Libreria Dottrina Cristiana”) publishing house informed us that there were some difficulties. In particular, the reviewer did not like the phrase “every human representation of God is up to a certain point idolatrous. The transcendent God is only a ‘utopia’ for the human person immersed in an earthly experience (...) Religious maturity certainly includes this awareness of the dialectic and relative nature of our God representations” (Milanesi & Aletti, 1973, p. 116). That particular phrase was mine and I firmly objected to its removal. It was a phrase that gave clear expression to the epistemological layout of the whole discipline. Then, as today, it was for me a fixed point in my understanding of religious language from a psychological point of view. Furthermore, it found various connections with a so-called apophatic theology, which holds that God could be addressed in what He is not (*per viam negationis*), and not for what He is. Ultimately, the book was published without censure or corrections. But suspicion about our “orthodoxy” was already spreading within ecclesiastical circles and the Roman universities.

The fact that the book bore my signature as well as my mentor’s was a gesture of extreme generosity to me on Milanese’s part, and its impact is evident, even today, on my relationship with my assistants, students, and collaborators, who all have access to my own personal library, where they can consult books, periodicals, and also my own personal notes on the psychology of religion. Often they stay to discuss their studies and happily prolong these conversations over a pizza and a good red wine. I try to pass on to them everything that I learned from Milanese: a mentor’s passion and enthusiasm is as important for students as the theoretical content of his or her teaching.

During my time at the Salesian University I also had the opportunity to examine other epistemological approaches. One Roman pontifical university had started offering courses in psychology of religion. However, generally speaking, the content was determined primarily by apologetic or pastoral interests. There was one exception, however, namely the courses held by Sister Gertrud Stickler at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, “Auxilium.” Formerly a student of Vergote at Louvain, Stickler shared the view that psychology of religion was mainly psychology. Later she would also take an enthusiastic and active part in the organizations that support this discipline. In contrast, the attitude at the prestigious Gregorian University towards the discipline was varied and ambivalent. Fruitful collaboration with the Roman psychoanalytic world had begun thanks to the efforts of Padre Giovanni Magnani, founder (1965) and director of the Institute of Religious Sciences. Later, in 1971, an Institute of Psychology was founded at the same university, with the specific intent of tackling serious pastoral problems, mainly the large-scale defections (which numbered in the thousands) from the Society of Jesus over a period of just a few years. The two institutes, although coexisting within the same university,

conducted their activities in parallel, without any interaction, also because of differences in organization and scope. Magnani, together with Godin, was closer to American ego psychology and to French psychoanalytic literature.

The Institute of Psychology, run by Father Luigi M. Rulla, was meant to be a school for the training of trainers for the clergy. This school remained quite alien to and distant from the Italian world of psychoanalysis, psychology in general, and psychology of religion in particular. My own position was, inevitably, closer to that of Godin and Magnani, with whom I had worked for years. The organization of the “Rulla School” left me somewhat perplexed on account of the vagueness in its epistemology: the claim that it could assume a preset Christian anthropology at the start of psychological research, and the use of psychology as an ancillary function, that is, in order to tackle the urgent and serious problem of the high dropout rate in religious vocations. It was evident from the start that this school was incapable of entering into a dialogue with the international mainstream of psychology and with the psychology of religion around the world. The improper use of terminology borrowed from psychoanalysis has led to its remaining in cultural isolation right up to the present day.

## **A Psychoanalytic Reading of the Religious Discourse**

Moving to Milan in the mid-1970s, I started a formation curriculum in psychoanalysis that followed the rigorous guidelines of the Italian Psychoanalytic Association, which formed part of the IPA, the International Psychoanalytic Association. From the beginning of the 1980s my main profession was that of a psychoanalytic psychotherapist.

Given the neutrality required of an analyst in relation to the patient’s reported content in analysis, I worked on the assumption that in no way should my personal attitude towards faith and, more specifically, towards the belief or unbelief of my patient, influence my work as a psychoanalyst. However, my experiences as a psychoanalyst have been enriched by my capacity to interpret religion, as experienced by the individuals I have encountered, using the methodology learned from my empirical research in the psychology of religion. The psychoanalytic perspective has taught me to decode what lies behind human language about God. When I say “behind,” I refer not only to what might be suspected, but also to what lies beneath. In other words, when I say that psychoanalysis decodes what lies “behind,” I also mean what lies “inside” the words with which one accepts or refuses God.

Daily clinical practice, psychoanalytical theoretical teachings, and years of experience as a lecturer in psychology of communication at the Faculty of Medicine have led me to focus my attention more on the syntax than on the semantics of an individual’s language, and hence, on the religious language, as well as on the overdetermination of every speech act, whether conscious or unconscious (Aletti, 1998).

Sustained by my new familiarity with Freudian psychoanalysis, I sought to consult critically the works of various French-speaking theologians and scholars who had become interested in psychoanalysis primarily through the work of Jacques Lacan.

These included Maurice Bellet, Louis Beirnaert, Marc Oraison, Jacques Durandeaux, and, in particular, Jacques-Marie Pohier. Many of them saw in psychoanalysis an iconoclastic function, that is, a means of purifying religion from cultural and historical sediments and being able to free religious discourse from the imaginary order and to direct it towards the symbolic order. My rereading of these authors was attentive and critical, and occasionally enriched also by personal contact. I began to appreciate the unbiased search for the psychological truth of religion undertaken by some of these writers, especially Pohier, who started with a critical evaluation of his own experience as a believer. This approach led Pohier to question his previous work as a theologian and to renounce a systematic presentation of doctrine. For him, “doing” theology had become essentially the search for truth and for the motivations – even the unconscious ones – for believing, and a bearing witness to his own personal faith: why do I believe? The question was crying out for a personal answer and personal involvement. Pohier attempted to provide a response in a book that immediately drew my attention on account of the fact that its title, *Quand Je Dis Dieu (When I Say God; Pohier, 1977)*, echoed the question that had so long fascinated me.

The Lacanian perspective that inspired the majority of these French-speaking authors encouraged me to engage directly and critically with the *Écrits* of Lacan. But Lacan’s work seemed to me difficult to combine with my clinical practice. Rather, I found myself oriented more towards the authors of the object relations theory and to Winnicott in particular. His concept of illusion, in the sense of deceiving oneself in a real world, seemed to me illuminating. The transitional phenomenon model, derived from the childhood stage specific experience of the transitional object, provided a new reference model that could also be adapted to adult relational and cultural experiences. Art, eroticism, culture, religion, and also science, and even the clinical environment itself could be understood as transitional experiences. Affirming the transitional nature of experience leaves ample room for a subject’s creativity and for the authenticity of his religiousness (Aletti, 2007).

Starting from these clues, I found myself joining the list of the many psychologists of religion who had applied the concept of “illusion” to religion. I retraced the historical use of the model of illusion applied to religion, starting from Freud, and going via Pastor Oskar Pfister and Lou Andreas Salomé to the modern application of the Winnicottian model of illusionary transitional phenomena (Aletti, 2004a, 2005), and to Ana-María Rizzuto in particular. The latter’s works were made known to the Italian public thanks to the translation of some of her works in a series of books on psychology of religion for which I was responsible (Aletti, 2000). This developed into a friendship and a collaboration that has lasted many years now.

The adoption of the Winnicottian model had brought considerable hope to the psychologists of religion who were also believers and who saw new apologetic potential. But in my opinion, there is no necessary and spontaneous link between believing “in anything at all” (Winnicott, 1968/1986, p. 143), and Christian faith in God. The model is useful insofar as it helps understand psychologically what takes place in the mind of the believer, but not to justify religion. In fact, the model of the illusionary transitional phenomenon can be applied just as well both to the

believer's faith and to a "belief" in the nonexistence of God. Also in this case I had to acknowledge the legitimate restrictions and the limitations of research in psychology of religion.

## **Teaching Psychology of Religion in Italy: A Bumpy Road**

As already mentioned, my main profession is that of a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. I continue to pursue my profound interest in psychology of religion as a side activity, but not as a true profession. It might be described as a hobby, although a demanding one. Even though in these last 10 years I have often taught as many as three courses in one academic year, I still consider the teaching an extra. My employment as a university lecturer was ongoing but peripheral, and did not offer any real future in terms of an academic career.

In 1977, on the initiative of the Rector Giuseppe Lazzati who was highly supportive, I became a researcher in the newly founded Department of Religious Studies at the Università Cattolica. Among the first tasks I was given there were those of directing an interdisciplinary seminar on "Psychoanalysis and Religion." This included an interesting and fruitful debate with the theologian Pierangelo Sequeri, who lectured in dogmatic theology at the Catholic Theological Faculty of Northern Italy in Milan. During those years I was completing my 3-year specialization course in work and organizational psychology.

Towards the end of the 1970s I was engaged in systematic teaching activity at the Università Cattolica, always on a voluntary basis and without any financial reward. There was no post in psychology of religion, therefore I was first seconded as an assistant to the professor of general psychology and subsequently to the head of developmental psychology. I held lectures and seminars mostly on psychology of religion in early development and tutored students in their dissertations relating to this subject. This was an excellent opportunity for me to fill in my knowledge of international literature on psychology of religion. I have made a habit of reading the same texts as my students and I discuss all the chapters of their essays with them sentence by sentence. Not having any research funds, nor in those days the authorization to order books for the university library, I decided to buy them with my own money. In this way, I gradually managed to build up my own personal library of books on psychology of religion in my home.

As I broadened and updated my knowledge of the literature, I became aware of developments in psychology of religion at an international level. This also increased my frustration, as I was increasingly conscious of the limitations in this field in Italy. It made me realize how important it was for me to have contact with foreign scholars. I also experienced, with a certain frustration, the old sterile opposition between the psychoanalytic and the ecclesiastical worlds. It was not the first time that a university authority would ask how it was possible for me to combine my profession as a psychoanalyst with teaching at a Catholic university and with my own Christian faith; as a psychoanalyst, I was considered to be a sexist and an atheist!

I conducted several empirical research projects in the field. As I recall them now I realize that more or less all of them, though adopting different designs and different theoretical models, were aimed at answering that initial, “When I say God...” question. I conducted research on the learning of God attributes using Piaget’s semi-clinical interview method, and on the general understanding of the concept of God in the various developmental stages of life. My specialization in psychology consisted in research on a large sample of Italian adolescents and their understanding of the concept of God. It identified five different psychic modes, the institutional, the rational, the relational, the naturalistic, and the problematic. In the elaboration of the data, I made use of cluster analysis. It was the first time (1981) that this method had been used in the psychology of religion in Italy. At that time the technique was extremely rare and the machines needed to carry it out were cumbersome and expensive. The computing center in my university did not have one, and I was therefore obliged to turn to one of Italy’s large psychosocial survey centers for the elaboration of the data, all at my own expense, of course! The research with this method continued for a decade and more than 5,000 Italian adolescents were interviewed. The results were published first in journals, and later were summarized in two chapters of a book (Aletti, 1992a).

As my personal experience grew, I became more convinced that, in the psychology of religion, the empirical and the psychodynamic interpretations were two methodologically different approaches that shed light on different aspects of the complexity of the human individual and of the individual’s religiosity in particular. In reality, the two approaches embody two different modes of understanding, not only in psychology of religion but also in psychology in general: one is qualitative and hermeneutical, the other more quantitative and experimental. The scientific experimental model aims at identifying aspects, factors, and variables that have an operational definition and that can be isolated in a research design that demonstrates replicability, correlations, and causal connections and therefore, to a certain extent, lends a certain amount of predictability to the process. However, because of its nature, this cumulative collection of data can only refer to general, and consequently, artificial categories when it comes to religious characteristics common to a group of individuals. Psychoanalytic investigation, on the other hand, acts within a dual relationship that cannot be repeated. It involves longitudinal observation of the conscious and unconscious motivations from a subjective account. Psychoanalysis as a narrative is characterized by anecdotes and interaction in its structure. Psychoanalytic interpretation is post-dictive rather than pre-dictive. This allows a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the idiographic personal religious experience, but only if the patient wants to include it in the personal account within an analysis and in a spontaneous way (Aletti, 1998, 1999). It should be emphasized that although the approaches are distinct from each other, for a psychology researcher they are mutually inspiring. With its own clinical method and in-depth observation of the person’s psychic experiences as they develop over the long term, psychoanalysis offers intuitions on the psychic processes that can be both profound and refined. Empirical research should be conducted on some of these processes in a quantitative manner and on a sample of subjects.

## The Challenges for the Discipline: Between Academia and Professional Associations

A gradual change of attitude towards the discipline within Italian academic circles, particularly at the Università Cattolica, did eventually begin to take place. Starting from 1987, I was made responsible for the teaching of psychology of religion within the Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Settentrionale in Milan, a post that I still hold to this day. Every year since 1995, I have been invited on a contractual basis to teach a course in psychology of religion at the Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione in the Università Cattolica of Milan, at both the Milan and Brescia campuses. Although I have not received adequate support and often been discouraged by the organization of the syllabus, the course has given me much satisfaction as well as some disappointments. On the positive side, the students have always been motivated and full of enthusiasm. Some of them have become my collaborators and friends, contributing with their research and publications to the development of the discipline. The low point was when 1 year I had only one student in my class. Today the students are not numerous (there are about 50), but they are keen and interested. Generally speaking, in Italy, the attitude of the academic world and of mainstream psychology seems geared towards a certain change and it appears, at least in theory, open to the possibility that psychology of religion might find a place in state universities. There are already, in fact, some encouraging signs (Aletti, 2001a). The Milanesi Award offered by the SIPR (Italian Society for Psychology of Religion: the association that includes all Italian psychologists interested in this field) for the best thesis in psychology of religion, always attracts between 15 and 20 new participating graduates. This is a confirmation of the renewed and widened interest in the field. Distribution of the bulletin *Psicologia della Religione-News* reaches 2,000 copies in Italy as well as another 250 abroad. Certainly my dream to see psychology of religion find its place as a relevant discipline in the psychology faculties has not been realized. But some change is already visible. There has been a constant increase in the number of lecturers interested in the subject, as well as an increasing recognition of the autonomy of the discipline and its place within the psychological rather than the theological or pedagogical disciplines (Aletti, 1992b).

In compensation for the lack of interest shown by the academic world, adherents to the discipline have a strong personal commitment to it, which is evident in their work with study groups and other cultural associations. So although, on the downside, there has been a lack of economic means, research funds, social recognition, and incentives for young learners, the purity of members' motivations has been assured. Only members genuinely interested in the subject, and not in an academic career or in economic benefits, have adhered to it. This has led to a situation where those interested in the subject have had to have another source of income and a profession that left them free time to devote to psychology of religion, as if it were a hobby. They have included psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, and psychologists who have chosen to put their expertise at the service of their intellectual curiosity, as well as philosophers, priests, and sometimes university lecturers from other disciplines

with a personal interest in psychology of religion untainted by conditioning or academic pretensions.

One organization that has played an important role is the Italian section of the AIEMPR (Association Internationale d'Études Médico-Psychologiques et Religieuses), an international group that, from the end of the 1940s, included among its members many European scholars of Romance and English languages. These included psychoanalysts, doctors, psychologists, and anthropologists. I myself joined for about 10 years, starting from 1988, and took part in some of the conferences. The AIEMPR, which started in a confessional context, as the initial title suggests (ACIEMP: Association Catholique Internationale d'Études Médico-Psychologiques), particularly the Italian section, did not quite live up to my expectations. I was seeking a nonapologetic, lay, "neutral," and specifically psychological approach. For this reason I sought other paths.

In 1981, a group of psychoanalysts, philosophers, and theologians, united by a common interest in relating depth psychology to religion, held a conference in Frascati, near Rome. This was the beginning of ASPER (Association for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Religion). The epistemological method proposed in my paper, "Psicologia, psicoanalisi e religiosità: indicazioni per un dibattito epistemologico" ("Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and Religiosity: Directions for an Epistemological Debate" [Aletti, 1984]), was widely accepted and played its part in the growth of the association. Although poorly funded, the association was sustained by the enthusiasm of its founder, Franco Morandi, and organized several meetings over the course of a few years; in some cases, the proceedings of these meetings were even published. But the association, which was limited to acting as a network for these meetings, came to an end as the result of a lack of a proper organization and an institutional structure with paying members and scientific contributions. Having observed these difficulties from close range, I realized how important it was for a nonacademic cultural association to have a structural and organizational basis.

In 1987 a new division of "Psychology of Religion" was founded within the Italian Psychological Association (Società Italiana di Psicologia), of which in those days practically all Italian psychologists, academic and professional, were members. The first board was elected in 1989. The major inspiration and driving force came from Professor Leonardo Ancona, who was a student of Gemelli's at the Università Cattolica and, like the latter, a great supporter of AIEMPR.

Ancona's epistemological approach was quite different from that of psychology of religion. He assumed some kind of interface between psychology *and* religion, which presupposed a relationship of mutual influence between the two. He believed that faith could offer the psychologist "an extra eye" for research. This kind of confessional and "mediational" approach of Ancona's seemed to reflect his intention of proposing his own person (as a model of a believer and an academic) for the role of director of the Institute of Psychiatry at the Università Cattolica of Rome. He saw himself as a mediator between the Catholic Church's institutions and Italian psychoanalytic circles. Within the division there were other scholars, including myself, who were much more in favor of complete autonomy in research in that particular field of psychology, which saw religion as an object of scientific research.



The second approach implied a nonconfessional and autonomous stance towards religious institutions. Both positions were present within the same division, but the second (the nonconfessional one) became more popular, as my election as secretary testified. Since taking on this responsibility, I have to this day been involved in carrying out the organizational tasks of the division. In 1995, as the SIP became less relevant, the division was given an autonomous legal structure and became SIPR (Italian Society for Psychology of Religion), a nonprofit cultural organization. I have been its president from the outset. The association has 150 professional and academic psychologists, and acts as a cultural stimulus, as well as providing organizational support. It holds study days and conferences, publishes its bulletin, *Psicologia della Religione-News*, three times a year, and every other year holds a competition known as the Giancarlo Milanese Award, for the best thesis on a subject related to psychology of religion.

From its beginning, the SIPR was always careful to consider a variety of psychological approaches to religion and all the subdisciplines, theories, and models of mainstream psychology. The conferences, which are held every other year and always focus on a particular theme, cover a wide spectrum of topics, such as depth psychology and the new clinical-hermeneutic prospects in psychoanalysis and religion (Aletti, 1999, 2002a), religious identity (Aletti & Rossi, 1999), pluralism and fundamentalism (Aletti, 2004b), the interaction between neurobiological and cultural aspects (Aletti, 2006a), gender differences (Aletti, 1991), the new religious movements (Aletti, 1994b), cultural psychology of religion (Aletti, 2006b), religion and coping (Aletti, 2003a), religion and psychotherapy and counseling (Aletti, 2008), and religion and attachment theory (Aletti, 2009a; Rossi & Aletti, 2009).

In each of these conferences special attention is given to the epistemological and methodological evaluation of the various approaches undertaken and to their validity and usefulness for the psychological study of religion. Being directly involved in the preparation and organization of these conferences, and in the editing and publication of the proceedings, I myself have always found them useful as a vehicle for deepening, presenting, and eventually publishing my own personal interpretation and evaluation of these single approaches and methodologies. Quite naturally, this psychic phenomenon called religion shares the complexities of the human being. None of the psychological approaches provides total understanding of the religious attitude, but all reconstruct some aspect of it. Personally, I think that the clinical perspective is the most complete and the best fitted for capturing the complexities of the individual's psychic functioning with regard to religion. By "clinical perspective" I do not mean psychotherapeutic practice but a way of looking at the individual while respecting his or her specificities, idiosyncratic characteristics, and "phenomenological" intentions of the processes leading to becoming a religious person. This perspective follows the individual in his or her personal history, through developmental processes that are not always harmonious and synchronized, but which go through difficulties and crises with unpredictable outcomes (Aletti, 2009b).

The SIPR conferences are open to foreign scholars and there is always a high-profile international figure among the speakers. The proceedings are published, at least in part, also in English, providing a contribution to the international debate. In addition, the society encourages its members to participate in international

psychology of religion organizations and at their conferences. This international dimension has provided me with the opportunity to meet some of the most important figures in psychology of religion from Europe and the United States. Eminent participants at our conferences, who were later made honorary members, have included Antoine Vergote, Ana-María Rizzuto, and Jacob Belzen. On more than one occasion they have been my guests, and friendships have been formed. Time spent with them has always been pleasant, and they have enriched me with their friendship and insights. For my part, I have also been invited twice to hold a series of conferences and meetings with colleagues in Brazil.

In 1994, together with my wife Daniela, I participated in the Fifth Symposium of the European Psychologists of Religion in Lund, Sweden and presented a paper on my research on adolescent religion (Aletti, 1994a). It was the first time that an Italian scholar had taken part and the chairperson of the International Committee of European Psychologists of Religion, Jan van der Lans, invited me to their meeting. I have remained a member of this group and thus been able to learn, not only through books but also through direct contact with the protagonists, about developments abroad, where conditions have always been more favorable than in Italy. Conversely, I have also been able to offer some contributions from my own experience with the national association of psychology of religion (SIPR), which did not in fact have an equivalent in Europe. I subsequently took part in all the conferences of the European group, which at the Glasgow meeting of 2003 adopted the name of IAPR, International Association for the Psychology of Religion. Since then, I have accepted positions on the boards of other international associations, as well as on the editorial boards of the major journals dealing with the subject. With time, the number of Italians participating in international meetings has increased. At first, it was only myself and my collaborators who took part, and this at our own expense, on account of our not being able to avail ourselves of university funds. At the Vienna conference of 2009, in contrast, 15 Italians made presentations.

## **Conclusions: Small Steps on a Long Journey**

On rereading the story of my 40-year journey through the field of psychology of religion, I perceive that progress has been made and milestones passed, which suggests to me that there has been continuity and coherence in the history of the discipline, even if my ultimate goal has not yet been achieved.

## ***A Psychologist of Religion***

I consider myself a psychologist of religion, seeking, through the study of lived religion, a better understanding of the human psyche. My main motivation is *curiositas* (curiosity) and my methodological approach is “lay” or, in other words, free from confessional concerns or university career ambitions.

In my view, *psychologists of religion*, strictly speaking, are “psychologists with specific academic psychological training and who choose to study, either regularly or occasionally, using psychological methods and criteria, a particular aspect of a person’s life, namely religious behavior.” On the other hand, *religious psychologists* (often themselves religious individuals who are also psychologists) are openly in favor (to the extent, at times, of declaring it upfront) of a belief in God’s existence and are interested in promoting this. This almost always takes the form of the religion to which they belong (Aletti, 2001b, p. xxii).

Personally, as a psychologist of religion, I consider it absolutely necessary to take a “neutral” stance, in the sense of abstaining from making any judgments on the objective pole of the believer’s faith. At the same time, precisely *because* I am a psychologist, I deem it necessary to know the religion to which the believer makes reference. However, judgment should be limited to the psychological truth. What I am researching is not “theopsychology” or “psychotheology,” but a psychology of religion informed by the theology of that particular religion to which the individuals being studied adhere. Study of religious behavior, in my opinion, should focus on the actual experience of adhering to a specific creed, and not attempt to lump people’s different religious beliefs together in some kind of generic “religious median” or religious sentiment common to all. Nor is it a question of a specific dimension of the personality, which – according to some – is present in all the various cultural and historical forms of religion. In short, I hold that psychology of religion should defend its specificity as a psychological discipline, while on the other hand respecting the specific contents of any religion (Aletti, 2003b).

### ***Defending Psychology in Psychology of Religion***

In my opinion, it is obvious that psychology is not interested in the essence, origin, or the truth content of any religion. Besides, as a psychologist I do not study a generic concept of “holy,” or the religious dimension in an abstract form (*homo religiosus*). My interest is rather in the person’s psychic functioning with regard to the religion encountered in a particular culture. I am concerned not with God, but with the believing in God. Psychological research is centered not on the religion, but on the individual believer and her attitude towards her religion. It involves underlining the importance of the psychic processes that underlie the statement “God.”

As a psychologist, and even more as a psychoanalyst, I am curious and I am used to looking for what lies within, behind, and beyond what is stated. The psychological relevance of faith lies in the satisfaction of the desire for God to exist (and not in the validation of the content). From a psychological point of view, the most important thing about faith is the act of believing. What really counts in faith is not *belief*, but the process of *believing*. I am interested in learning about the “how,” and not the “what,” of belief. Accordingly, I think that the study of atheism is also part of psychology of religion because, as Oskar Pfister told Freud, atheism is a negative faith.

## ***Respecting Religion Within the Psychology of Religion***

Often, as a psychologist of religion, I have criticized certain ecclesiastical circles for making “nonpsychological” use of psychological categories, rather as if psychology had only an ancillary function. This is very often done not only for theoretical but also for pragmatic purposes, such as pastoral objectives, spiritual counseling, vocational discernment, and the like. However, it tends to distort research as well as the acquisitions brought about by psychology (Aletti, 2002b).

On the other hand, I often hear church people (pastors and theologians, as well as ordinary believers) expressing a sense of discomfort when reading the results of surveys and psychological research that seem to them inadequate, peripheral, and fragmentary when compared with what is the “true” religious attitude in their real lives. They complain that often what is spoken of in the research of psychologists is not “their” religion as they actually live it, but a generic form of religiosity or spirituality. This kind of criticism should be heeded by the researcher. Constant engagement with believers and theologians helps the psychologist to activate the process of deconstruction of his own categories and to verify the continuing validity of the instruments used, even those that have become “established” by frequent use over many years. This is to avoid the risk of measuring religion as an abstract preset conceptual category instead of religion “lived” in a particular geographical and cultural context.

I am fortunate in that teaching in a theological faculty helps me keep up to date with the theoretical reflections and pastoral practices of religious professionals as well as with the religion as it is actually lived by believers. As a result, I have maintained my view that the human individual lives her religiosity in a specific institutional context, with beliefs, liturgies, and determined associational and organizational forms. Psychological study, although in theory concerned solely with the interaction between the individual psyche and these cultural and historical manifestations, in practice also needs to take account of what these manifestations actually are. In fact, the “When I say God” question which I try to answer presupposes that there is a subjective adherence to the Transcendent, but it hinges also on a concrete cultural given, an institutionalized religion, and a determined symbolic-linguistic context (Aletti, 2003c). The institutional perspective (dogma, cult, organization) is essential for the symbolic-religious language. In line with these considerations, the course that I give every year at the Università Cattolica is entitled Psychology of Religion and Psychology of Religious Communication.

### ***“Amateur” Professional Work***

Given that my profession is that of a psychoanalyst, a job that keeps me busy for 4 days a week, my research, teaching, and organizational activities in the field of psychology of religion might reasonably be described as amateur. Given the amount

of time that I devote to this pursuit, the term “hobby” would not be appropriate, even if it does accurately convey the idea that my personal motivation derives from scientific curiosity and not from practical or economic interests. In Latin terms, I would define it as *otium* rather than *negotium*. The same holds true for a number of my collaborators and students, who devote their free time to research and organizational tasks. This sense of friendship and the sharing of common interests is one of the most appealing aspects of our work as SIPR leaders. It is an atmosphere we seek to re-create in our meetings with colleagues around the world. Our conferences are occasions for international cultural exchange, and sharing food and wine at table is equally important. This cultivation of relationships with colleagues is not just a matter of responding to a sentimental need, but a guarantee of sound research collaboration. In order to study religious behavior it is, in fact, important to integrate the various psychological approaches through the collaboration of many researchers, as the single approaches give us only partial understanding. Today in our field it is rare to find scholars with horizons broad enough to include the whole range of possible approaches and models necessary for a unified and integrated vision of psychology of religion. Some of our mentors had far wider knowledge and they are sorely missed. They were enormously cultured and taught us that one does not become a psychologist of religion simply by researching and reading studies on psychology of religion, for the simple reason that, although everything which is human is psychological, in religion not everything is psychic. One needs to possess a good general culture: knowledge of one’s times and cultural environment, a good knowledge of the psychology of the global personality, and also knowledge of the principles of the theology of religion to which believers refer and which is manifested in their “religious” attitudes.

### ***Psychoanalysis and Faith: Two Journeys, One Goal: The Truth About Man***

Psychoanalytic knowledge about the biological and pulsional roots of language, as well as practical experience of the efficacy of the word in psychoanalytic practice, have helped me and guided me in the reading of religious language. My knowledge of the theology of the religion that I study has allowed me to recognize meanings as well as signs and symbols in religious language. Similarly, a knowledge of the patient’s culture of reference is necessary in order to understand his language, his symbolism, and his cultural referents. Psychoanalysis is interested not only in the semantics of the patient’s talk, but also in the syntax: that is, not in the concrete details of everyday life, but in the underlying psychic processes. In the same way, psychology of religion studies the syntax of religious language and not its doctrinal content. Rather, its interest is in the (conscious and unconscious) processes, or, in other words, the pathways, conflicts, and outcomes of becoming a religious person. For this reason, it seems to me that the clinical approach is the best way to gain an understanding of the individual’s experience of religion within a specific cultural context.

Psychology of religion, inasmuch as it is a scientific discipline, does not posit any pragmatic or pastoral goals. There is therefore no such thing as confessional psychology of religion, just as there is no such thing as Christian psychotherapy. I am completely opposed to talk of “Christotherapy.” Certainly, theologians and pastors can make use of the knowledge derived from psychology of religion in their work. But the usefulness of psychology of religion to pastoral activity will be proportional to how faithful it remains to its own psychological competence, and to how much it reveals of an individual’s psychology. The proper contribution of psychology of religion consists in helping the individual to know his/her own truth, that of which he/she is aware as well as that of which he/she is not aware. The psychological truth (like the psychoanalytic truth) of the human being is not something that can conflict with, or even restrict, the truth concerning the religious person. I have never believed in the need for a special “dialogue” between science and faith. My impression is that the call for dialogue stems from mutual suspicion. For the believer, as for the non-believer, one thing is certain: to the extent that psychological knowledge is true, it cannot but free the person and render him or her able to relate with that mysterious depth, which is alluded to by the name of God, in a more radical, affective, and subjectively conscious way. And the question, “When I say God...what am I saying?” will continue to demonstrate the asymptotic nature of religious language as it strives to reach the depths of what lies beyond and of the inexpressible (Aletti, Fagnani, & Colombo, 1998).

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## Chapter 3

# The Path of Least Resistance

Donald Capps



I began to think of myself as a psychologist of religion when I was a doctoral student at the University of Chicago from 1966 to 1970. My location was the Divinity School and, more particularly, in the area called “Religion and Personality.” Prior to my doctoral studies, I had spent the academic year at Yale Divinity School (1965–1966), where I had previously received the Bachelor of Divinity (BD) degree in 1963. I was in the Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree program. It was during this year that I became interested in the psychology of religion and began searching for doctoral programs in this academic field.

I discovered, however, that although there were professors who specialized in psychology of religion, there were no doctoral programs as such. James E. Dittes, the professor who introduced me to psychology of religion during my STM year, was a case in point. He was a psychologist trained in the Department of Psychology at Yale University (PhD 1958) who taught courses in pastoral care and counseling at

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D. Capps (✉)  
Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, USA  
e-mail: cappsdonald@aol.com

Yale Divinity School (BD 1955). However, he also taught a course on psychology of religion. Because a relatively small number of students enrolled in the course, it was more like a seminar than a course. William G. T. Douglas, a professor at the School of Theology at Boston University, was another example. He, too, was a specialist in psychology of religion but was located in the Department of Pastoral Care and Counseling. Unlike Yale Divinity School, Boston University had a doctoral program in pastoral care and counseling, but there was no provision made for students who wanted to specialize in psychology of religion. Much the same situation prevailed in university departments of psychology. There were professors who specialized in psychology of religion (such as Bernard Spilka at the University of Denver), but students would not be admitted to psychology doctoral programs on the strength of their interest in psychology of religion. As I had not majored in psychology as an undergraduate, it did not even cross my mind that I might apply to a doctoral program in psychology. At the time, departments of religious studies in universities were experiencing considerable growth, and many of these were developing doctoral programs, but psychology of religion was not among the various specializations to which students were admitted. Conceivably, a student interested in psychology of religion could pursue this interest as a doctoral student in the history of religions (sometimes also called comparative religion or world religions) but because the professors who taught in the history of religions were unfamiliar with psychology of religion – and sometimes, like systematic theologians, rather hostile toward it – such a student would be likely to experience major difficulties in securing a doctoral degree.

Among the available doctoral programs, I felt that the program in Religion and Personality at the University of Chicago was the best fit for a student interested in psychology of religion. After all, the word “religion” appeared in the title and the word “personality” resonated with my familiarity with Gordon W. Allport’s *The Individual and His Religion* (1950) and William James’ *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1982) which focuses on the individual. I had also heard from students there that they were strongly encouraged to take course work in other departments of the university. So although the program was oriented around the theology–psychology dialogue model that was quite popular at the time, and many of the students had strong interests in pastoral counseling, I was able as a doctoral student to pursue my interest in psychology of religion through careful selection of topics to write about in doctoral seminars, by focusing to a much larger extent on the psychologists than the theologians whose writings were assigned in doctoral seminars, and by taking courses in psychology of religion from David Bakan, who was a member of the psychology department at the time.

I was fortunate to have an adviser in Peter Homans who did not insist that I focus on the dialogue between theology and psychology. My interest in the study of religious personalities, which had taken form during my STM year in the psychology of religion seminar taught by James Dittes, enabled me to more or less ignore theology as the critical study of Christian doctrines and instead focus on the ways in which various individuals adopted, endorsed, or reacted against the religious ideas

that were current in their own cultural context. So, in a sense my interests were more related to church history than to systematic theology.

On the other hand, I did not have any illusions about how my interests would be viewed by church historians. In my focus on religious individuals, I was very much influenced by Erik H. Erikson's *Young Man Luther* (1958) and thought of my own studies as belonging to the same genre. However, I had read the review of *Young Man Luther* written by Roland Bainton (1959; see also Bainton 1971), perhaps the most influential Reformation scholar in the United States at that time, the tone of which was quite dismissive. He claimed that much of what Erikson says is simply a reflection of the fact that he does not have a full command of the Luther literature, and that what Erikson gets right (his "valid insights") had already been said, and said better and more authoritatively, by others. It was also abundantly clear that he did not share William Langer's view with which he began the review, as presented in Langer's presidential address before the American Historical Association in 1958, that psychiatry is the next frontier of history.

The tone of the review was not surprising to me. In the required church history course at Yale Divinity School in which I enrolled in 1960–1961, Roland Bainton had entered the classroom one morning in what seemed to be a rather combative mood. He held up a copy of Erikson's *Young Man Luther*, and said that it was the worst book on Luther he had come across. As he had not assigned the book and none of the students knew anything about it, most, I assume, took his critique at face value. For me, however, I remembered that only a few years earlier there was a campaign by concerned parents to keep D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* out of public libraries because of the adverse influence it would have on the high school youth who read it. When they learned of this campaign, many high school youth went out and purchased the book so that they could find out what the adults didn't want them to read. Following their example, I went out and purchased Erikson's *Young Man Luther* and read it.

Although I thought Bainton's critique was unfair, I was rather determined at that time not to get involved in the study of my own religious heritage (which was Lutheran). It was not until I took Dittes' course in psychology of religion 3 years later that I became interested in Erikson's project as reflected in the subtitle of *Young Man Luther*: "A Study in Psychoanalysis and History." As my reluctance to get involved in the study of my own religious heritage had not abated in the meantime, it was most fortuitous that we were assigned Dittes' (1965) own article on the continuities between the life and thought of Saint Augustine, an article that, like *Young Man Luther*, focused on Augustine's internal (or psychodynamic) conflicts but, in contrast to *Young Man Luther*, paid much greater attention, and understandably so, to the subject's relationship with his mother than to his father. In effect, this article presented the intellectual rationale for the seminar: we were to focus on the psychodynamics involved in the lives of religious individuals and how their theological views reflected their efforts to resolve their internal conflicts. It also established its basic format, which was that each week one or two students would present a religious individual in whom they were especially interested.

My presentation focused on John Henry Newman, a rather serendipitous choice, as I had noticed while shelving books at the Divinity School library (a source of income) that there were quite a number of biographies, an autobiography, letters and diaries, and a collection of sermons. I wrote my STM thesis on Newman and his contemporary, Søren Kierkegaard, focusing on their disenchantment with the churches in which they were raised, their vocational struggles, and the fact that Kierkegaard died in his early forties and Newman, at roughly the same age, converted to Roman Catholicism. My doctoral dissertation focused on Newman only.

During my STM year, I also took a course on the work of the parish minister which was taught by several faculty members. I do not recall much about the course itself, but I do remember the day that the other faculty engaged in good-natured teasing of James Dittes because he would be absent the following week to attend a professional meeting. The teasing was not only about his absence (after all, the others were occasionally absent for similar reasons) but about his involvement with this particular professional group. There seemed to be something about this professional group that they found puzzling, perhaps even off-putting. It was the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. I later learned that he was the secretary of the society and therefore responsible for much of its communication with members, collecting dues, and so forth. He was also, however, about to assume the editorship of the society's journal.

This good-natured ribbing of him for his involvement in the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion remained in my memory, and midway into my doctoral studies at the University of Chicago I sent him a paper, addressing it to him as the journal editor, which I had written on a relatively unknown American religious figure, Orestes Brownson, who had gone through a series of religious affiliations until he eventually, like Newman, became a Roman Catholic. To my surprise, Dittes accepted it (Capps, 1968). A couple of years later he accepted another paper, this one on the subject of Newman's vocational struggles in his twenties (Capps, 1970b).

At that time, doctoral students did not normally attend professional society meetings. I attended my first meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion the year that I completed my doctorate (1970). Thus began a long association that culminated in my serving as president of the society from 1990 to 1992. From 1980 to 1983 I was book review editor of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, having been chosen for this post by Philip E. Hammond, a sociologist of religion, who was the journal's editor at the time. When his term as editor ended, I succeeded him and served as editor from 1983 to 1988.

I became acquainted with Paul W. Pruyser at one of the early meetings of the society that I attended. I had met him briefly in 1969 as a doctoral student when he came to the University of Chicago and gave a lecture on his recently published, *A Dynamic Psychology of Religion* (Pruyser, 1968). In the early 1970s, however, I was teaching at the University of Chicago (at the ranks of instructor and assistant professor) and was able to attend society meetings on an annual basis. The year his book, *Between Belief and Unbelief* (Pruyser, 1974), was published, I arranged a session on the book. I recall how adamant he was that his book title emphasized the state of being *between* belief and unbelief and not, as a recent book by Robert N. Bellah (1970) suggested,

the state of being *beyond* religious belief. When his book, *The Play of the Imagination: Toward a Psychoanalysis of Culture* (Pruyser, 1983) was published, I recalled his stress on “betweenness,” as this book, heavily influenced by the writings of D. W. Winnicott, focuses on the “illusionistic world” that exists between the “autistic world” and the “realistic world,” and shows how this in-between world of tutored imagination informs the sciences, visual arts, literature, religion, and music.

By the time these regular contacts with Paul Pruyser occurred, I was already sympathetic to psychoanalytic views of religion through my reading of Erik H. Erikson, Sigmund Freud, Heinz Hartmann, and others. Peter Homans’ doctoral seminar on theological responses to Freud had introduced me to Freud’s writings on religion. I had also taken David Bakan’s psychology of religion course and had written a paper for it on his recently published *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (Bakan, 1965); this paper, with a few revisions, had been published the year I completed my doctorate (Capps, 1970a).

But conversations with Paul Pruyser were especially meaningful to me at the time because, although I was classified as a psychologist of religion in the Society for Scientific Study of Religion membership list, I was not a certified psychologist. I felt greater affinities, by virtue of my personal associations, to the sociologists of religion than to the psychologists of religion, but I also knew that I was not in any danger of becoming, much less being viewed as, one of them. Paul, therefore, modeled for me a somewhat anomalous position or status within the society with which I came to identify myself. He was fully engaged in the society (serving as its president from 1974 to 1975) but he was not viewed as a psychologist of religion in the technical sense. After all, he was psychoanalytic in his psychological orientation and he was the director of the educational programs at the Menninger Foundation and thus not affiliated with a university or college. Nor was he accompanied at society meetings by a coterie of doctoral students.

James Dittes was also involved in the society in the 1970s and he, too, seemed to be somewhat of an anomaly. He, too, served as president of the society (1972–1973) and on the governing council from 1973 to 1977. But his anomalous status was reflected in the topic and fate of his presidential address. The program book for the 1973 annual meeting announced that his address would be: “When Idols Crumble: The Art and Agony of Disengagement.” But the actual address turned out to be a meditation on “How the Wizard of Oz Changed Don Quixote into Paul Revere.” It was a tour de force critique of how the researchers in the scientific study of religion had changed over the years from brilliant if idiosyncratic adventurers to hurried messengers. As Dittes later recalled, auditors Erik H. Erikson and Andrew Greeley, also known for their iconoclasm, warmly applauded the address (Capps, 2003, p. 25). But the original theme of disengagement was prophetic, as the address he *did* give was upsetting to more than a few of the society’s regulars, and he chose not to submit it for publication in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (the only presidential address not published after it became a tradition to do so). When I asked him for a copy some 30 years later, he informed me that it no longer existed.

As Pruyser and Dittes were the two society members whom I especially admired, I began to see myself as something of an anomaly too. I recall feeling a certain personal identification with the crab to which William James (1902/1982) alludes in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. As James put it, the crab “would be filled with a sense of personal outrage if it could hear us class it without ado or apology as a crustacean, and thus dispose of it. ‘I am no such thing,’ it would say; ‘I am MYSELF, MYSELF alone’” (p. 9). However, the difference between us was that no one was seriously suggesting to me that I *was*, in fact, a real psychologist of religion. So there was really nothing to be personally outraged about.

In any event, when the American Psychological Association formed a section on psychology of religion, there was something of a mass exodus of psychologists from the society, but as I was not a member of the American Psychological Association, I continued to attend society meetings because I was interested in what the sociologists of religion were doing and also because of my friendship with Janet Jacobs, a sociologist of religion whose research was on the borderline between sociology and psychology (see Jacobs & Capps, 1997). Eventually, though, as more and more sessions at the annual meetings were devoted to studies of various denominations, and were presented from the perspective of insiders of these various denominations, I began to drift away from the society. The last meeting I attended was the year that my book *Men, Religion, and Melancholia* (1997) was published. In a sense, this seemed rather appropriate, for the book focused on four men (James, Otto, Jung, and Erikson) who, as far as religion is concerned, were neither insiders nor outsiders, but somewhere in between, and was written from the perspective of another man (Freud) who understood himself to be on the outside looking in. And this brings me to the title of this essay: the path of least resistance.

## The Paradoxes of Resistance

I chose the title “The Path of Least Resistance” because it would allow me to engage the work of my first real mentor, James E. Dittes. I read his book *The Church in the Way* (Dittes, 1967) shortly after it was published. It interested me that he wrote this book as a self-proclaimed psychologist of religion. In the preface, there is a brief section headed “A Psychological Perspective” which begins with a statement of how the book might be classified: “In terms of the distinctions by which libraries and curricula, authors and teachers are usually divided, this book might be classified as an application of *psychology of religion* to problems of *pastoral theology*” (p. 10). The very tone of this statement is somewhat ironic, as Dittes spent much of his career challenging the very penchant of academicians to engage in classifications (e.g., Dittes, 1971).

In any event, he goes on to say that the psychological perspective of the book is a blend of many elements, but that its central thesis is “borrowed directly from the concept of *resistance* in psychotherapy, as this is understood by the psychoanalytic

approach to therapy” (p. 10). The thesis of the book is actually stated in terms of hypotheses, of which there are three:

1. *The church can become a living parable.* This hypothesis states that the desperate search within the church for meaning and faithfulness may be the best possible preparation for men and women to find meaning and faithfulness in the world. The struggle of the church against irrelevant and futile busyness, empty forms, half-commitment, and misunderstanding (the very struggle that makes some want to abandon the existing form of church as hopeless) may provide guidance and incentive to combat the futility, emptiness, and half-commitment of our world.
2. *Intransigence can be a form of disguising and expressing religious pilgrimage.* This hypothesis states that a person’s unreadiness to participate in the church’s true mission and ministry and the vigor with which a person invests in that which is peripheral, incidental, and even a distraction from this mission and ministry may actually reveal a vitality, a positive though tortuous engagement with faithful ministry.
3. By combining the first two hypotheses, a third hypothesis (which is actually the book’s thesis) emerges, namely that “the resistance which seems most to thwart ministry *may* be the best occasion for ministry” (p. 6). In other words, “When the church seems most in the way, it may be most in the Way of Him who is met at the cross of the crowded ways of life” (pp. 6–7).

Two key chapters in the book are Chap. 2, “Resistance in Psychotherapy,” and Chap. 4, “Resistance: A Sign of Vitality.” In the former, Dittes focuses on the fact that there invariably occurs a point in psychotherapy where the client’s progress stops. Instead of doing the work the therapist and client have agreed upon, the client asks the counselor to take on more work, such as by insisting that the counselor provide advice or analysis. Or the client may scold the counselor, grossly or baldly misperceive the counselor’s gestures of acceptance, such as by interpreting silence as evidence of ill will or laziness. Or instead of talking about significant personal issues, the client talks about the weather, or trivial details of daily life, or about someone else’s feelings, even those of the counselor. Or the client may enter into intellectual discussions about theories of therapy.

The therapist may view such resistance as merely a procedural matter (calling for a change in therapeutic tactics) or the therapist may instead view it as intimately and dynamically related to the underlying problems of the client and to the purposes of the therapy. In other words, the resistance itself is meaningful and invites, even requires interpretation. Dittes presents a counseling case in which the therapist communicated his acceptance of the resistance by indicating that he fully understood the client’s need to take a break, to catch her breath. He borrows Erik Erikson’s (1958) concept of the moratorium (pp. 43–45, 100–104) and says that this is how therapy itself should be viewed:

Therapy is not oriented toward solving immediate pressing practical problems, personal or social. It is, rather, a consolidation and maturation of resources so that the practical problems may be freshly tackled with new vigor and new wisdom and presumably greater success (p. 110).

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for church and ministry of the ideas presented earlier in the chapter: the importance of interpreting the resistance instead of attempting to obvert it procedurally and the freedom from the pressure to produce reflected in the concept of the moratorium.

The chapter on resistance as a sign of vitality focuses on the fact that resistance requires effort and that it is motivated. As for the effort part, one could argue that it would require less effort if the client would simply get on with the work of therapy. On the other hand, the very fact that effort is involved means that the client is neither indifferent nor emotionally disengaged. In fact, the resistance is an indication of just how invested and engaged the client really is. Also, the resistance is motivated in the sense that the client is struggling with an intrapsychic conflict of competing forces. So, rather than viewing the resistance as a problem in the client–counselor relationship, the counselor needs to recognize that the issue is really an internal one (pp. 139–143). As with the previous chapter, Dittes discusses the implications for church and ministry of the idea that resistance is a sign of vitality.

Subsequent chapters focus on the ways in which the minister may go about drawing inferences from the resistance of clients and church members, and on the ways in which the minister may respond appropriately in light of these inferences.

This brief summary of Dittes' discussion of resistance is directly relevant to the title of this essay, "The Path of Least Resistance." At the time his book was published, I was rather confused about what I wanted to do with my life. When I graduated from Yale Divinity School in 1963, I was planning on engaging in doctoral work in English literature. During the first 2 years of my 3 years at Yale Divinity School, I considered and then abandoned the idea of doctoral work in theology and religious ethics. My senior year I took several courses and seminars in comparative religions and was thinking of doctoral work focused on early Greek religions, my interest whetted by independent reading (Nilsson, 1940; Festugiere, 1954). But Norvin Hein, the professor from whom I took these courses and seminars, advised me that the only religions in which one could do doctoral studies at Yale Divinity School were Hinduism and Buddhism. So I applied to doctoral programs in English literature and viewed my acceptance in them as an indication that this is where my future vocation lay. I began the fall semester at the University of California in Berkeley with this plan in mind but within a week or so I applied for admission to the doctoral program in philosophy and was admitted to it. As the semester continued on, I came to the realization that I didn't really belong in philosophy either, so I terminated my program and returned to Yale Divinity School and enrolled in the STM program.

After struggling for several years to find my true vocation in and through the courses and seminars that I was taking at the time, the courses and seminars I took from James Dittes felt altogether different. I simply enjoyed them and as I sat in the classrooms and seminar rooms, I did not constantly ask myself, "Why am I here?" or "Where is the nearest exit?" The irony, of course, is that although Dittes was writing his book on the meaningfulness of resistance, I was discovering a very different truth, that one should not despise or disparage the path of least resistance.



On the other hand, Dittes emphasizes the importance of allowing a client the freedom to take a break from the process and its accompanying demands of making progress. This, I believe, is precisely what I was doing during my STM year. After all, I was not progressing in a doctoral program that would lead to a teaching career nor was I making progress toward a career in ministry. So, as far as vocational progress was concerned, I was marking time.

I indicated earlier that I happened to notice the several shelves of books on John Henry Newman when I was shelving books in the Divinity School library. I also mentioned that I sent a paper to Dittes on Newman which was published in 1971. A year later another article of mine on Newman was published in *Church History* (Capps, 1972), which is published by The American Society of Church History. This paper focused on his poem, “The Pillar of the Cloud,” which was written in 1833 during a period of vocational uncertainty and struggle. John Bacchus Dykes wrote a tune in 1867 for the poem and “Lead, Kindly Light” soon became a well-known hymn. The basic point of the article was that the poem’s personal reference in the final couplet to “those angel faces” was not only to Newman’s recently deceased sister Mary but also to his paternal grandmother, whose death coincided with his ordination as a priest in the Church of England and who was his spiritual mentor in his early childhood years.

I had various reasons for deciding to write on Newman for my STM thesis and later for my doctoral dissertation, but a central one was the fact that I embraced the following lines of his poem as if they were my own: “Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see//The distant scene; one step enough for me.” The lesson, if there is one, would seem to be that the very fact we have chosen the path of least resistance suggests that we can be rather oblivious as well to where the path is taking us. Psychology of religion is a good, well-worn path for one to follow. It is not, however, for those who have a strong or desperate need to know its final destination. Unlike Christian, the hero of John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1957), who knew that his destination was the Celestial City and worried a great deal that he might not get there, the psychologist of religion (this one, at least) is under no illusions that there is, in fact, a clearly identifiable destination, and therefore, there is no reason to worry that one might not get there.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I discovered Robert Fritz’ (1989) book *The Path of Least Resistance* after writing this essay. He argues that the life of an individual is like a river in that it follows the path of least resistance; this being the case, the underlying structure of one’s life determines what the path of least resistance will be. Therefore, just as engineers can change the path of a river by changing the structure of the terrain so that the river flows where they want it to go, so individuals can change the very structure of their lives and thereby create the life they desire (pp. 4–5). Some may resonate with Fritz’ engineering analogy, but I tend to go along with these rather more relaxed lines from a poem by William Stafford (1998): “Freedom is not following a river./Freedom is following a river,/though, if you want to” (p. 142).

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## Chapter 4

# Pastoral Psychology as a Point of Transfer from Systematic Theology to the Psychology of Religion

Heije Faber



### Earliest Encounter: Professor De Graaf

My first encounter with the psychology of religion must have been through the man I have always considered my true teacher: H. T. de Graaf.<sup>1,2</sup> He was a typical liberal Protestant, who did not believe in the bodily resurrection, and for whom the significance of Easter and Ascension and other Christian feast days was not fixed, but formed the subject of inquisitive contemplation. He was a great scholar, an original and independent thinker, and a man of integrity and deep faith, but he was older

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<sup>1</sup>This text is based on interviews given in the years 1988–1994 and on the autobiography inspired in part by these interviews (Faber, 1993). The footnotes, dates, and bibliographical and biographical references are the work of the editor (J.A.B.).

<sup>2</sup>Hannes Tjeerd de Graaf (1875–1939) first studied theology; his doctoral dissertation was an historical study of theology. He then studied psychology with Gerard Heymans (1857–1930), the first professor in the Netherlands who was required to teach, from 1890 onwards, the formal

than Roessingh, his predecessor at the University of Leiden, who died young.<sup>3</sup> He commanded the respect of the students, but did not move them as Roessingh had done. During lectures he gave the impression of being someone who was genuinely interested in many things, who was very knowledgeable, thought about things seriously, and therefore had a lot to offer, yet struggled to find an adequate way of doing this (his explanations were dry and rather uninspiring) as well as being someone who lived a deeply pious life but was unable to share this with others.

Anyone who reads and reflects on his books, however, cannot help but see in him not only an original thinker but also a great mind and a deep believer. His life was nurtured by, or rather aspired to, a great vision: a society of people, here on earth, filled with (God's) spirit. Inspired by Heymans, he was a monist in heart and soul, someone who saw the world and God as one continuum, but that seeing was not real-life observation. What he actually saw before him was a world steeped in human misery, struggling for deliverance and light, for incarnation, as he often said. His vision accorded with the ideas of such great thinkers as Thomas Aquinas and Hegel, who also saw the huge contradictions in this world in the light of a oneness generated by God. He differed from those two thinkers, however, both because he let himself be guided, in a way other than they did, by certain ideas rooted in Christianity, and because as a modern man of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he was acquainted with the notion of man as a creator and perpetuator of culture.

Another thing that struck one about De Graaf was his attentiveness to people. He was a humanist, first and foremost, in the traditional sense of someone who believes in the possibilities of humanity and human society, someone for whom freedom and culture were goals in life, and yet he also held the Christian view of people as fellow human beings responsible for one another. The body of Christian thought was central to his thinking: he saw Christ looming before him as the figure he sought to follow, who vouchsafed to him in the depths of his being, as it were, a view of, and therefore the belief in, God. One could say that he, too, thought dualistically, but that he went beyond that dualism in his belief in God's work, carried out by Christ and his disciples. De Graaf thus opposed traditional Christian "doctrine," in which dualism is vanquished by Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection. In this way

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element of "science of the soul" (*zielkunde*). Heymans was the only Dutch psychologist to achieve international recognition before the Second World War. (William James, e.g., was very positive about him.) De Graaf was so interested in psychology that he obtained a second doctorate under Heymans's supervision, writing an empirical dissertation (De Graaf, 1914). As a young clergyman De Graaf was already known to have an interest in psychology (including the psychology of religion): he was the author of the first Dutch article to discuss the publications on the psychology of religion that began to appear in other countries around 1900 (De Graaf, 1905). As a professor of theology (Utrecht, 1923–1926; Leiden 1926–1930), he always gave courses in the psychology of religion (and was very probably the first to do so in the Netherlands). His *De Godsdienst in het Licht der Zielkunde* (Religion from the Perspective of Psychology) of 1928 is still the most systematic introduction to the subject ever published in the Netherlands.

<sup>3</sup> From 1916 until his death, Karel Hendrik Roessingh (1886–1925) was Professor of Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, and Encyclopedia of Theology at the University of Leiden. De Graaf was appointed as his successor.

he differed from “right” modernism, which sought illumination and immersion in the Christian tradition. He was decidedly “left.”

I have provided this background information on De Graaf, because I am aware that his thinking strongly influenced me in my search for an inspiring ideology, and that in recent years, as underlying questions of “faith” became increasingly insistent, his deep commitment never lost its grip on me, but continued, time and again, to appeal to me.

De Graaf was known as a psychologist of religion, or at least someone with leanings in that direction. Quite honestly, I never found out exactly what this meant to him. To his mind he worked according to the psychological method, trying in this way to distinguish himself from the Neo-Kantians. In ethics, too (one of the subjects he taught), he maintained that it was necessary to collect material before trying to talk about it. This testified to his empirical streak, which he had certainly acquired from his teacher Heymans. (He would have nothing to do with the psychology of religion à la Wobbermin,<sup>4</sup> for example, which in his view remained theology and was not psychology.) Yet De Graaf is not the reason I became a psychologist of religion; that came about in a completely different way.

While still under De Graaf’s supervision, I began working on my PhD, which was wholly and systematically theological, in fact, religiophilosophical in nature, on the subject of Troeltsch (Faber, 1933). After De Graaf’s premature death, I finished my dissertation under the supervision of his successor, L. J. van Holk.<sup>5</sup> Van Holk and I became very friendly: I acted as a kind of assistant at the seminars he taught, and continued to do so after finishing my doctorate.

## Studying to be a Clergyman: Theology?

Thanks to several scholarships, I had the opportunity to study for two periods in Germany too: in 1927 in Marburg and in 1928 in Heidelberg. There I came into contact with such famous people as Bultmann, Heidegger, Otto, Heiler, Jaspers, and Rickert. Once I had obtained my doctorate, however, my years as a student of theology were well and truly over, and I had to look for a job. The obvious thing to do was to become a clergyman. (My father was a clergyman, and without giving it much thought I had embarked on the study of theology with a view to following in his footsteps.) Two weeks after marrying (at the end of November 1932), my wife and I assumed our duties in our first congregation, in Velzen-IJmuiden-Oost, not far

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<sup>4</sup>Georg Wobbermin (1869–1943) was an extremely productive and, in his time, very well-known German theologian. His notion of the psychology of religion differed from the usual understanding of it as an empirical science. He considered his systematic theology to be conceived along the lines of a “psychology-of-religion method.”

<sup>5</sup>Lambertus Jacobus van Holk (1893–1982) was a theologian, who was certainly interested in the psychology of religion, but he never published any writings in this field, nor did he ever teach the subject.

from Amsterdam. It was a very experimental situation: a number of liberal Protestants wanted to try out a new form of religious community. I had been asked to serve their congregation by a friend of mine, a family physician, who was their chairman. They could only give me a small living, so I had to take on other work as well to support us: preaching engagements elsewhere, presiding over confirmation classes in neighboring towns, a small post as an assistant at Leiden University, and later the work I did for the Internationaal Verbond voor Vrijzinnig Christendom (IVVC), the International Association for Liberal Christianity. Its chairman, Lambertus Jacobus van Holk, had asked me to be the association's secretary.

At the beginning of their careers, clergymen often find themselves in a place with a tradition, sometimes one stretching back for centuries; in such cases they receive help and guidance from members of the congregation or from nearby colleagues. Here, however, everything was new, because the congregation was in the midst of reinventing itself as a religious community. This was a difficult situation, to be sure, but it had the charm of the experimental. An even greater difficulty, however, was the fact that despite having learned a great deal at Leiden University about the ancient Egyptians, the Jews, and the Greeks at the time of Christianity's emergence, no one had ever given me any advice about pastoral work among city people. I had spent 7 years at university, and had even taken a course in practical theology, but the elderly professor who taught it was more interested in the early period of our church history, and did not rise above the anecdotal treatment of his own years of experience, by now in the distant past. As a liberal theologian, moreover, he did not take a pastoral view of the various branches of pastoral work.

I also realized how little I knew about people's inner lives, about the sick, for example, and others too. I began to ask myself whether my studies should also include some psychology. In those first years I read quite a few books on psychology, although I noticed that it had a limited, sometimes even a negative, influence on my practical dealings with people. It was not until many years later that I learned, through Clinical Pastoral Education, how clergymen can use psychology to positive effect.

## **The War Years: Going into Hiding and Studying Psychology**

My executive position in Eenheid Door Democratie (Unity Through Democracy), an organization founded in the 1930s to oppose Nazism, meant that I was forced to go into hiding during the Second World War. I stayed with an old friend from university who lived in the Betuwe region, and decided to spend my time fruitfully by studying psychology in a more systematic way. Naturally I needed some help to do this. In the preceding years I had read rather a lot of Rümke.<sup>6</sup> He received me and gave me a choice: either to come and work with him at the psychiatric clinic, thus

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<sup>6</sup>Henricus Cornelius Rümke (1893–1967) was an internationally renowned psychiatrist and psychologist, with strong phenomenological leanings. He wrote a number of purely psychological books, and was for a short time Honorary Professor of Developmental Psychology at Utrecht (1933–1936) before being

gaining a bit of practical experience in psychology, or to get in touch with his colleague Roels, the Utrecht psychologist,<sup>7</sup> and agree with him on a program of study (inasmuch as the universities were closed). For various reasons – one of which was my being in hiding – I chose the latter course of action. Roels was very helpful: I spoke with him a number of times, and even wrote a paper for him on “numinous feelings in children” (later published in a volume of my essays: Faber, 1950–1951, 1961a). But as fate would have it, he turned out to have distinct National Socialist sympathies (I later found out), and one of his sons even fought on the eastern front. I had to get out of this precarious situation as best I could, so I sent him a note, saying that a change in my circumstances had forced me to abandon my plans. I suspect that he understood that there was more to it than that, but he never responded.

I then got in touch with the Amsterdam professor Révész,<sup>8</sup> to whom I am greatly indebted for his guidance during my studies. He was Hungarian through and through, with an air about him of the old Donau monarchy and its culture, which we know so well from early twentieth-century Vienna. He presented himself as the first to introduce to the Netherlands a methodologically grounded empirical psychology. (The Amsterdam psychologists often claimed to be the pre-eminent empiricists; Duijker, then Révész’s principal assistant, also asserted this, as did De Groot later on in his well-known *Methodologie* (1961). They championed a scientifically oriented, quantifying brand of psychology employing statistical analysis.) Révész was also a person with extraordinary ideas about the future of psychology, particularly its methods. He began by discouraging me: in theology, he said, it was common to read ten books and then write an eleventh. In psychology it was different: first one makes careful observations and then cautiously formulates an hypothesis, which is then put to the test. Only by degrees does one develop a theory, which in principle remains an hypothesis requiring further testing. He made it clear to me that the practitioners of these two sciences have different modes of working: the psychologist focuses on observation first and theory second; the theologian is primarily concerned with

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appointed Professor of Psychiatry there (1936–1963). In 1939 he published the first original study of Dutch vintage on the psychology of religion (Rümke, 1939), which, to his own surprise, was received very positively: it was reprinted at least 11 times in the Netherlands and was also published in translation in a number of other countries (Belzen, 1991).

<sup>7</sup>Franciscus Mattheus Johannes Agathos Roels (1885–1962) was the first professor in the Netherlands to be appointed exclusively to a chair of psychology. He did a great deal for the proliferation of psychology in this country, and his interest in the psychology of religion played a modest role in this. Roels specialized in psychology (as part of the discipline of philosophy) at the Catholic University in Louvain with A. Michotte (1881–1965), who in turn had studied with Wundt and Külpe. Even though he did not carry out any research in this field, Roels must have considered the psychology of religion as an ordinary subdiscipline of psychology; for a number of years, therefore, he lectured on the subject in the context of teaching “empirical and applied psychology” at Utrecht University, and in various places in his five-volume *Handboek der Psychologie* (Handbook of Psychology), he devoted some attention to religion (Roels, 1934–1947).

<sup>8</sup>In 1919 Géza Révész (1878–1955) was appointed Professor of Psychology in Budapest, where he founded the first Hungarian Institute of Psychology. From 1932 until his death, he was Professor of Psychology at the University of Amsterdam.

developing a theory and thinking it through. He wanted to take his chances with me, on the condition that I accustom myself to this *modus operandi*, that I acquire the habit not only of reading, but of gaining practical experience in his laboratory, as soon as it opened after the war.

I worked hard during my years in hiding. I had the time, after all, and it helped give meaning to the emptiness of my existence. While doing pastoral service in the days of unemployment, I had seen so many people whose lives had been ruined by years of idleness that I resolved not to let this happen to me. I succeeded, too, even though it took some effort not to succumb to the occasional bout of depression. The farmers in the Betuwe region had a saying: "Don't worry, things always turn out differently!" One of my children burned these words with a red-hot poker into a piece of wood, which stood during those months in pride of place on my desk as a permanent reminder not to be disheartened. Of course despite Révész's remark, there was not much I could do but read books. Yet this had the advantage of enabling me, sometimes through painful perseverance, to familiarize myself with the fundamental debates in the young discipline of modern psychology, and it gave me the opportunity to read a number of essential books that made clear to me what Révész had meant about the psychologist's mode of working. I recall reading about the research being done at that time on perception and memory. And I tried, of course, to become acquainted with my teacher's oeuvre, which was interesting: he had written about such topics as the sense of touch, the human hand, and the origin of language. In short, this reading alone opened up a whole new world for me. This became even clearer when, after consulting Professor van der Horst (1893–1978), the Amsterdam psychiatrist whose course I had chosen as my subsidiary subject, I delved into Karl Jaspers' standard work *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1913), in which he used a phenomenological approach to paint a fascinating picture of the various syndromes, his systematic mind providing insight into current psychiatric theory. At the time I had attended a seminar given in Heidelberg by Jaspers, who already then was more of a philosopher than a psychiatrist. Now I enjoyed getting to know another side of him.

My plan was to take a Master's exam. According to the rules then in force, I did not have to take a Bachelor's exam: my BA in theology was already enough. I chose my second subsidiary subject from my BA in theology, so I did not have to repeat it. During the war, it was not possible to take exams, but after the capitulation, when there were again opportunities to travel, although often by very primitive means (the Germans had stolen engines and cars) I seized the opportunity, insofar as my pastoral work allowed, to gain the necessary experience in psychological testing at the laboratory, thus learning the psychologist's mode of working. Several years later I took the exam in Amsterdam with Révész and Van der Horst. I did not feel fully at home in the field of psychology: in the second half of my life, psychology came to play an important role in my work, perhaps not so much the modern empirical psychology that Révész and many contemporary psychologists have in mind, but rather psychoanalysis, and yet I felt I never became a professional psychologist.



## A PhD in Psychology

After the war I was invited by Jan Groen (1903–1990), a well-known psychoanalyst who had started out as a specialist in internal medicine, to take part in multidisciplinary research in the field of psychosomatics, which he was setting up with the help of a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation. To this end he had assembled a group of specialists at the clinic in the Wilhelmina-Gasthuis in Amsterdam to examine and discuss specific patients. This group included a number of important researchers: specialists in internal medicine, psychiatrists, psychologists, a sociologist, a physiologist, and an anthropologist. As a theologian I was, of course, the odd man out, but I was soon captivated by the work being done there, to which I could occasionally contribute, whether as a theologian, by elucidating certain statements made by patients, or as a psychologist, by asking appropriate questions. My association with this group was of vital importance to me: after working with them for 2 years, I came to the conclusion that I had collected so much interesting material that it would be a pity not to use it for a publication. I approached Duijker, who had meanwhile succeeded Révész, with the proposal to write a dissertation titled *Over Ziek Zijn* (On Being Ill). He approved of my plan, which led to my obtaining another PhD in Amsterdam in 1956.

The book, which was well received and sold out in only a few years, consists of two parts. In the first, theoretical, part I set forth my views on the various ways in which being ill is discussed in medicine, philosophy, theology (pastoral care), and psychology, with an eye to acquiring, through an interdisciplinary approach, more theoretical and practical insight into that intriguing aspect of human existence. What I found most fascinating in this first part was the dialogue with the phenomenological views of J. H. van den Berg,<sup>9</sup> who took a completely new phenomenological, and therefore philosophical, approach and sought to make the ideas of Sartre and Heidegger profitable to traditional scientific discourse. By demonstrating that he operated within the coordinate system of philosophy and not of (modern) science, I attempted to show that the significance of his views lay somewhere other than where he thought they did. Philosophy cannot be used to criticize science, as he attempted to do.

The second part contains an account of a study I carried out on 28 patients in the group, in which I attempted (by means of private talks in a question-and-answer format) to gain insight into their religious development and its possible influence on

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<sup>9</sup>Jan Hendrik van den Berg (\*1914) was a student of Rümke, who inspired his phenomenological interests. Van den Berg was the first Professor of Psychology at a Dutch theological faculty (Belzen, 2007), and later became full Professor of Conflictology in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Leiden. He achieved great renown, also internationally (for a time he was the most frequently translated Dutch scholar), with his so-called metabletic studies. By introducing the method of metabletics, which eventually caused attention to be focused on the connection between simultaneously occurring dissimilar events, he thought he had devised a completely new scientific discipline. For a critical evaluation, see Belzen (1997).

their experience of illness. Put more simply, I was trying to gauge the influence of neurosis, because these patients were all suffering the effects of neuroses on their religious lives.

## **Working at the University and Becoming Acquainted with (American) Clinical Pastoral Education**

In the spring of 1958, Van Holk phoned me with an offer: he wanted to know if I would become his principal research assistant. My wife and I had to give this some thought: not only were we reluctant to discontinue our pastoral work in Wassenaar, to which we had become attached, but the new position was not a professorship, such as I had previously aspired to, and so would not improve our financial situation. On the other hand, my age was starting to play a role. Combining pastoral work with my studies and other activities had gradually become a burden; now I had the chance to turn my hobby, which meant a great deal to me, into my profession. For my psychological ambitions, in particular, opportunities now presented themselves. Moreover, we would be able to continue living in the same house in Wassenaar, where I was then a clergyman. After several days of deliberation, I decided to accept the offer.

Upon my arrival at the theological faculty, I instantly ran into difficulties, which made me feel as though I'd landed in a hornets' nest. I wanted to get started in the field of psychology, but this was not so easy. Invited by the faculty, J. H. van den Berg had for some time been giving lectures in pastoral psychology to the theologians. And at the department of religious history, Fokke Sierksma, a former student of the phenomenologist of religion Van der Leeuw (1890–1950) at Groningen, taught courses in the psychology of religion.<sup>10</sup> Even though Sierksma carried out his extremely interesting studies discreetly, in a remote corner of the faculty, as it were, and had not given any lectures or led any seminars for years, he understandably dreaded the arrival of another psychologist of religion and therefore protested. How was I to find my way in such a lion's den? Those of us who were involved made an appointment to talk with the faculty's dean, who took the line that formal agreements were binding, and that Van Holk and I would just have to find a solution ourselves. At the suggestion of Van Holk, we formulated my assignment as "the psychology of the world view,"<sup>11</sup> and added the personal message that I was both compelled and authorized to go my own way. The tacit assumption was that I would try not to cause trouble.

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<sup>10</sup>Fokke Sierksma (1917–1977) was a theologian who specialized in *Religionswissenschaften* (the science of religion). He wrote one of the most profound studies of the phenomenon of projection in the field of the psychology of religion, but it was never published outside the Netherlands. Some information about his work in this context can be found in Belzen (2010).

<sup>11</sup>This formulation was probably taken from Jaspers' *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919).

I was lucky as regards that last point. After a short time, Van den Berg took the position that he no longer felt any need to give lectures, now that they had a pastoral psychologist with a lot of pastoral experience and solid credentials. In a very sportsmanlike way, he gave me free rein: in all my years at Leiden, my contact with him, though infrequent, was always friendly. Several years after my arrival there, I wrote – at the request of the editorial board of the magazine *Wending* (Turn) – a detailed analytical article on Van den Berg's growing oeuvre, in which I again distanced myself from certain premises in his work (Faber, 1967): to my delight, his reaction to my article was positive. Relations with Sierksma were more difficult. Over the years I sought contact with him on several occasions: in those days he was rather isolated from the rest of the faculty, and at some point had found himself at loggerheads with the authorities. I had the feeling that he valued the contact with me, although he never initiated it. I would have found it fascinating to collaborate with such a man, who was often engaged in highly original research, but nothing ever came of it. Accordingly, I began more and more to think that the best thing for me was to go my own way, for the time being sounding out my possibilities within the faculty.

With hindsight, what strikes me most about those first years, after I had found my way around the hornets' nest and familiarized myself to some extent with the tension between various members of the faculty, is the great freedom I enjoyed. At a university you live as an individual surrounded by other individuals, each in his or her own, preferably well-defined field. No one bothers you, or even shows much interest in your work. At first such freedom was stimulating, particularly because I still had a lot to learn about pastoral psychology, and because in Europe the whole field was still in its infancy. I had time to get my bearings and experiment on a modest scale. As I said, I did not have permission to lecture at first. In all honesty I felt like a dilettante, especially in the beginning. At the time of my appointment, I had asked the secretary of the governing board of the university if it would be possible for me to make a study trip to America. In Chicago, which I had visited a few times as secretary of the International Association for Liberal Christianity, I had heard about psychotherapists who had introduced new methods that were of interest to pastors: Rogers, in particular, who was working in Chicago in those years, and his school. The leader of Meadville, the Unitarian seminary where I had stayed as a guest on various occasions, knew of my interest in psychology and had even sent me a number of books shortly after the war. He had assured me that if I ever had the opportunity, I would be welcome at Meadville for a longer stay. The secretary told me that, given the urge to go to the United States (where, at one point, a third of all the researchers at Leiden University were to be found, inasmuch as European scholars viewed America as a kind of Mecca) the board of governors had decided that new members of staff would be given leave to go there only after 2 years at the university. In 1960 I spent 3 months in Chicago and afterwards a month traveling to various centers.

This stay was clearly a fundamental turning point in my life, for in the United States I discovered another method of pastoral training, clinical pastoral education, and thus found not only a basis for my work at the faculty in Leiden, but also a way of striking out on new paths in the world of pastoral care in Europe. I decided that

upon my return I would dedicate myself to organizing such education in the Netherlands and elsewhere too if possible.

Back home I felt compelled to order my impressions, so I wrote a small book about what I had learned, in the hope that it would arouse the interest of others (Faber, 1961b). But even though it was translated into German, the book provoked little response. One reaction was exceptional, however, and had great consequences for what I hoped would happen. I received a visit from Professor Han Fortmann of Nijmegen,<sup>12</sup> who told me that my book had moved him, particularly because he had plans to establish in Nijmegen a new department of pastoral theology as a cooperative venture between the faculties of social sciences and theology. He was convinced that he could learn a lot from the Americans in this respect, and asked me whether his assistant W. J. Berger, who had worked as a pastor at a psychiatric clinic, would do well to spend, as I had, several months in America, and whether I could supply him with some letters of introduction: not necessarily to Roman Catholics only, he replied in response to my question. Berger did in fact go to the United States, and what he learned there exerted a great deal of influence on the structure and methods of the new department, and on a personal level it marked the beginning of years of friendly relations between us.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, I began to organize training courses for pastors at several hospitals. It was the beginning of what would become a true movement, which was soon named the *Klinisch Pastorale Vorming* (Clinical Pastoral Education), and abbreviated to KPV: from small beginnings it branched off in all directions. It drew attention to itself: hundreds of pastors, Protestant clergymen and Catholic priests alike, participated in training courses that often prompted a fundamental reorientation of their working methods. In hospitals the KPV sparked interest among management, doctors, and nurses, and thus set into motion a better integration of pastoral work and hospital care. Now almost all hospitals ask for KPV-trained pastors, who have formed an active association. Having caught the attention of the educational institutions responsible for the training of general practitioners, these KPV courses found favor among many psychotherapists, as evidenced by their positive remarks. Together with the pastor Wybe Zijlstra (1921–1997), whom I got to know through the KPV and who became one of my best friends, I also spent considerable time in Germany, giving lectures and training courses. In other countries, too, I was a frequent speaker. I actually envisioned the KPV as a base of operations for pastoral psychology in the Netherlands, but it ended up becoming primarily a “practical theological” affair, which was something of a disappointment to me.

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<sup>12</sup> In 1956 Han Martinus Maria Fortmann (1912–1970), a priest and psychologist, was appointed Professor of the Psychology of Culture and Religion at the Roman Catholic University in Nijmegen. In the Netherlands he became well known for his popular scientific work.

<sup>13</sup> Willibrordus Johannes Berger (1919–2007) was a priest and psychologist. From 1963 onwards he held the post of lecturer in Pastoral Psychology at the Roman Catholic University in Nijmegen. Of particular interest is the fact that he was employed by the subfaculty of psychology, but was appointed to lecture in the faculty of theology and to be involved especially with the interdisciplinary department of “pastoral theology.”

## Social Unrest After the Second World War

The years after the Second World War were very different from those that followed the First World War, when a salient development was the rise and flourishing of youth movements, through which young people made themselves heard in a wide variety of fields. After the Second World War, however, the youth were absent, and, taking the lead from well-known German sociologists, people spoke of a “skeptical generation,” who preferred to stand back and wait. For all kinds of reasons, a feeling of insecurity crept into society, and thus into the churches. After the “triumphs” over “pagan” National Socialism, a number of theologians in the Dutch Reformed Church led the way; they took great pains to form a new view of the relationship between church and society, and were inclined to speak of the “Christianization” of public life. After several years, however, it appeared that a newly equipped church was still no solution to the problems of a society that had lost in a short time its foundation in the old agrarian and small-town structures through industrialization and mobility, a development that had also affected essential aspects of the church community. Moreover, the weakening of ecclesiastical authority brought to light a deep-rooted resistance to the coercion exercised by the churches, which led many people to suffer a fundamental crisis of confidence, to which the churches usually had no answer, that has continued to the present day. A similar development took place in the sphere of family life. The Netherlands quickly turned into a permissive society, and a huge generation gap opened up with regard to views on sexuality and later, too, the institution of marriage.

The prevailing insecurity clearly revealed itself in the field of theology. In the late 1960s I set forth in detail my views of the developments in postwar theology in a study titled *Geloof en Ongeloof in een Industriële Tijdperk* (Belief and Unbelief in an Industrial Age; Faber, 1969). The German psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich (1908–1982), who went a long way towards clarifying the emotional difficulties of German society after the war, had shown in his book *Auf dem Weg zur vaterlosen Gesellschaft* (On the Way to a Fatherless Society) how the above-mentioned factors had diminished the authority of father figures in modern society, and the effect this had on present-day people (Mitscherlich, 1963). In my study I developed this idea and what it means for theology, showing that many theologians, such as Robinson, Sölle, the radical God-is-dead theologians, all of the theologians who were being discussed at that time, resisted patriarchalism in both the image of God and church life, and pointed out the influential role played by the great figures of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, looming in the background. After reading my book, Pruyser wrote from America to express his approval,<sup>14</sup> but my

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<sup>14</sup>Paul Pruyser (1916–1987), of Dutch origin, was one of the best-known postwar psychologists of religion in the United States. He was active at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka (Kansas), where Faber became acquainted with him. He frequently supported Faber and the KPV in the Netherlands.

impression is that its matter-of-fact analysis, which is essentially confrontational, met with resistance here in Europe, where it was perhaps more difficult to accept the growing feelings of uncertainty.

Christianity was forced to take a different attitude to culture and reflect on the new task it had to set itself. What had happened to the human being in our society? That was the question that Fortmann asked himself; indeed, it had become a question that a lot of people were asking themselves (Fortmann, 1959/1971). Many found an answer to this question in the philosophy of Heidegger and Sartre, and the problem that presented itself to Christianity in these years was how to make its significance clear to modern people. My book *Geloofen Ongeloof in een Industrieel Tijdperk* clearly reflects all of this (Faber, 1969). There by means of modern psychology, as it was taught to me in Amsterdam, I attempt to study the books of radical theologians and modern “unbelievers,” thereby testing the hypothesis that the relationship of a technological society must, following Mitscherlich, be designated fatherless, and that this will have repercussions on the problems facing theology, which takes this seriously. Through psychoanalysis, with which I had acquired a first-hand acquaintance in Groen’s group, it was possible to understand that in religious experience, with its accompanying images of God, this relationship pattern is of decisive importance. I felt a need to give a psychological account of the ecclesiastical–cultural situation in which the church and Christianity now found itself: it was, if you like, a new way of confronting the old concern, by which I had begun to find my way in the church and theology, after studying in Leiden. My 1972 book *Cirkelen om een Geheim* (Circling Around a Secret) attempted to initiate a dialogue with psychoanalysis regarding its religious ideas; it was born of that same need and can therefore be viewed as a sequel to *Geloofen ongelooft*.

The book is an elaboration of the lectures on the psychology of religion that I gave around 1970. It consists of two parts. The first is an overview of what has been put forward from the psychoanalytical perspective about religion; it is a theologian’s attempt to enter into a dialogue with psychoanalysis. The second part endeavors to show that psychoanalysis can help elucidate a number of religious phenomena. In this regard I reconsider what I had long thought of as acute problems in religious life – coming from both the left (from such liberals as De Graaf) and the right (from the Reformed, such as Karl Barth) – and I also attempt to uncover the roots of these problems in the various relational patterns of the child growing up with a mother and a father, which are detectable as “projections” in his or her adult religious life. Psychoanalysis can be of great service to us in this respect, even though it tends to emphasize the father–child relationship.

*Cirkelen om een Geheim* was more favorably received than *Geloofen Ongeloof*: it was soon sold out in Dutch, and translations of it were published in England, the United States, and Germany (Faber, 1972/1973, 1972/1976). I regret this difference in reception. In both books I devoted a great deal of attention to the context of the contemporary religious/theological situation, and I suspect that it was precisely this aspect that found little resonance among readers.

## Professor of the Psychology of Religion

It was hugely disappointing to me that Leiden University proved unwilling to establish a chair in my subjects, pastoral psychology and in increasing measure the psychology of religion, as a systematic and investigative reflection on religion. I was lucky, however: at some point I was approached by the dean of the recently founded Roman Catholic theological faculty in Tilburg; he was a brother of my friend Willem Berger, Fortmann's assistant. Berger had told him, when he said he was looking for a lecturer in the psychology of religion and pastoral psychology for Tilburg, that he might well find me willing to fill the post. When he phoned, I told him honestly that I was still hoping to be appointed to a professorship. That proved not to be a problem: in only a few days the matter was settled. (For some years I combined the posts in Leiden and Tilburg. Given the newness of the subject, it was not easy to find someone to fill my post in Leiden. When my successor finally arrived, he first became a lecturer and later a professor.<sup>15</sup>)

My field received a completely different reception in Tilburg than it had in Leiden: in Leiden my subject had been tolerated, whereas in Tilburg it was welcomed with open arms. For that matter, the whole way of working at this confessional faculty of theology was different from a state university: not so one-sidedly theoretical, but much more focused on practice and therefore empirical, also with far less separation between theology and religious studies, on the one hand, and spirituality. For my own development as a psychologist of religion, the years in Tilburg were particularly fruitful. Because the psychology of religion was clearly included in the description of my professorial duties, I began to see more clearly the contours, the component parts, the deeper problems, the methodology: in short, the identity and the status of both the psychology of religion and pastoral psychology. I grew, so to speak, in my subjects. As regards the field of pastoral psychology, I have borne in mind all these years the remark Révész made during our first talk about the difference between theologians and psychologists. Circumstances have prevented me from carrying out systematic empirical research "according to the book," but my ambition has always been to bring pastoral training and the practice of the "craft" close to the reality of action, and not to let it become overrun by theory (dogma). With regard to practical training, what mattered most to me was teaching my students to be keen observers; as regards term papers and theses, the important thing was testing theory in practice; in training courses, the focus was on learning by doing and forgetting about the books (including my own!). I had always been aware of the danger that at the university I would begin to swim on dry land, as it were, and so I have made a point of continuing my practice of pastoral care of some kind, such as preaching and pastoral talks.

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<sup>15</sup>In 1980 all of the lectureships at Dutch universities were turned into professorships, as part of the many austerity measures: the old-style professorship was abolished, all lecturers were now called professors. A lecturer's salary was considerably less than that of a professor; professors appointed after 1980 were therefore much less expensive than their predecessors.

What I came to see as central to pastoral psychology was the figure of the pastor in a modern society, his “craft,” his “identity,” and his training to this end, with the accent on learning by doing (under supervision), and with the benefit of something the university was best suited to provide: learning to reflect adequately on pastoral work through research and knowledge of literature, in short, through some knowledge of theory. This theoretical education should include, in my opinion, the study of modern sociology and psychology, inasmuch as these disciplines contribute to a better understanding of man in society and provide insight into his personal conflicts and development, as well as considerable schooling in *Religionswissenschaften*, by which I mean primarily the psychology of religion. In recent years, since I have been pensioned, I have devoted myself to the latter in particular, concentrating especially on psychoanalysis (Faber, 1982, 1986a).

## Last Contributions to the Psychology of Religion

Psychoanalysis had gradually come to focus on the relationship of the child to its mother. It is in keeping with the development of psychoanalysis that in investigating neuroses, one first encounters the significance of the father for a child’s growth and only afterward, at a deeper level, that of the mother. Moreover, the wartime evacuation of children from the large English cities threatened with bombardment brought the problems of separating mother and child to the attention of analysts. In addition, even before the war many analysts had fled from Europe to America, where they had come into contact with the problems of a society which, in contrast to European society, gives much more room to mothers. In America it was Heinz Kohut (1913–1981) who rounded off these developments in psychoanalysis, arguing that in the very first relations between mother and child, a “Self” is formed that is of fundamental importance to a person’s later development: he therefore calls his brand of psychology “Self-psychology.”

Accordingly, in my 1991 study *Het Lichtend Geheim* (The Shining Secret) I attempted to illustrate the perspectives that this “Self-psychology” opens up for research into the “secret” of religion. The book builds on an article I contributed in 1986 to a Festschrift for my colleague Arnold Uleyn,<sup>16</sup> in which (at the request of Belzen and Van der Lans, the editors of the volume) I formulated my thoughts on “The meaning of contemporary psychoanalysis for the understanding of religion” (Faber, 1986b). The reader will understand that the issue of right and left and that of the religious/ecclesiastical situation both loom large in *Het Lichtend Geheim*. From a scientific point of view, it is a book in which an important part of my quest is concluded. It also contains an essay titled, “Jesus in the Light of the Psychology of

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<sup>16</sup>Arnold Uleyn (\*1926) studied theology in Louvain and Rome, and psychoanalysis in Vienna. Until 1986 he taught pastoral psychology and the psychology of religion at the Catholic University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands.



Religion,” in which I attempt to show how a psychoanalytical psychology of religion is capable of shedding light on the figure of Jesus. For me personally this essay also meant that I was able to illuminate the more-than-historical significance of Jesus by the roundabout route of a psychological study, aided by a comparison with the figures of Gandhi, St. Francis of Assisi, and Martin Luther King. The concluding essay is an attempt to formulate my thoughts on relating the findings of such psychological research to the burgeoning science of psychobiology, inasmuch as the confrontation of religion with modern scientific developments remains an important task.

## **Psychology: Importance for and Impact on Spirituality**

My work as a pastoral psychologist and psychologist of religion has been of greater importance to me than I can tell, and not only because it inspired me to embark on my theological quest. This, I believe, does not make psychology meaningful to people. Rather, it has clarified certain perspectives that have opened up for me on my quest, thus illuminating the possible paths and confirming certain choices or religious stances. I am thinking, for example, of the following: much light was shed on my struggle with the problem of right and left in Liberal Protestantism by the understanding that both can be traced to the influences of father and mother in the (religious) development of the child, and that this illuminates the problem of projection, which in the view of many, Freud for one, has such an impact on faith (see also Faber, 1985). In my later books on spirituality (Faber, 1979, 1980, 1987), written after I was pensioned, one can see how psychology helped me to clarify certain religious perspectives. Now I can give both right and left a justifiable place in my theology, and thus in my faith. Partly influenced by radical theology, the emphasis in my theological thinking came to lie on my fellow human beings; one could also say, on pastoral care. For me pastoral care came increasingly to consist in traversing life's path with others. Such questions as “Where are we heading as human beings moving through life?” and “What can we do to help each other along the way?” are therefore central to theological reflection on pastoral care. Psychology has no answer to these questions, but it can shed light on the problems pastors encounter in their work for and among people. With knowledge of people, as provided by psychology, pastors can obtain a more profound understanding of a human being's search for happiness, fulfillment in life and faith, as well as deeper insight into the difficulties and possibilities of pastoral communication. In this way psychology has helped me immensely to become a better pastor and thus to affirm my identity and my “craft” as a pastor. Psychology kept the window open, as it were, affording me a view of my fellow human beings and thus of the world, culture, and history.

What is more, via pastoral psychology, particularly in the KPV, I came to understand the importance to people's growth of communication in small groups (Faber, 1984). The conviction, reflected in the psychology of religion, that has taken root in me ever more firmly is that religion is born of the empathy between people. Here, too, psychology has made a great deal comprehensible to me.

When I attempt to trace the rough lines of this inner growth, I think I have to say that the blow that triggered a wave of unrest in my development led my “quest” to the depths of my soul. Before that time I was engaged with religion, church, and theology mainly in an intellectual way. The study of theology was the prelude to my jobs. But in the years of discontent, despite all my positive experiences and everything I had learned, I underwent inner turmoil. Because of my work at the university, it was a process with an intellectual component (theological and psychological), but one that involved my life, my emotions, my relations with people, my understanding of myself, and my search for a last foothold for my faith. Perhaps one could also call it a process of maturation.

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## Chapter 5

# Toward a Mainstream Psychology of Religion Beyond Poor Relation Status

Bernhard Grom



The path that brought me to the psychology of religion says much about the precarious predicament of this specialist field in the German academic world, both then and now: it took me abroad, and it also led me to practical theology, or to be more precise, religious education (*Religionspädagogik*).

I took an early interest in psychology and its application to religious experience. When asked to compose a résumé as a fourteen-year-old schoolboy, not yet knowing the term “psychology,” I stated that I would like to devote myself to “Seelenkunde” (literally the “study of the soul”) and become a priest. When I entered the Jesuit order in 1955 at the age of 19, alongside my intention of getting everyone in the world interested in the Christian faith if at all possible, I also had an entirely selfish psychological motive. In a biography of Ignatius of Loyola, I had read that with his *Spiritual Exercises* the saint had bequeathed to his order the art of reflecting upon one’s own emotions and motives and achieving clarity; this is something I wished to learn in order to become more emotionally balanced. But there was no introduction

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B. Grom (✉)  
Hochschule für Philosophie/Philosophische Fakultät SJ A Munich, Germany  
e-mail: grom@hfph.mwn.de

to issues in the psychology of religion that I might have read, or even studied at a university, available in the German-speaking countries back then.

This was something I soon noticed as I pursued my studies. Following my novitiate, between 1957 and 1960 I studied philosophy for six semesters in an order-run faculty in Pullach, near Munich. One of the course requirements was attendance at a lecture series on personality psychology that drew heavily on the book *Aufbau der Person* (The Structure of the Individual; 1938/1956) by respected psychologist Philipp Lersch, who was then teaching in Munich but also taught at our faculty following his retirement. In a language that was often a sheer pleasure to read, Lersch offered an overall picture that located the life processes of the individual in three layers: (1) the “life ground” with its body–mind unity and experience of the body, (2) the “endothymic ground” with its drives, emotions, and moods, and (3) the “personal superstructure” with its individually specific ego functions of thinking and volition. Here I found a phenomenologically sensitive description of feelings and states of mind, of forms of the “Lebensgefühl” or life feeling such as nihilism, humor, and so on. On religious experience, he stated in a footnote that it had been convincingly described by Rudolf Otto in his study *The Idea of the Holy* (1917/1924). In his layer theory, Lersch saw religious experience as one of the “transitive emotions.” Here, through “awe as the state of being moved metaphysically” (in much the same way as in amazement, admiration, aesthetic experience, or a sense of duty) the human being experiences a state of “being beyond oneself,” a transcendence. This perspective, along with his reference to “meaning values,” tallied with the basic idea of V. E. Frankl’s logotherapy, although I only realized this later on, as Lersch failed to mention him.

## **The Phenomenological Fixation on the “Nature” of Religious Experience**

Lersch’s magnificent phenomenological architecture drew one’s attention to the rich diversity of human emotion and described the religious realm in plausible fashion. This architecture allowed one to describe and “localize” many emotions and attitudes; but this static system could not explain why these develop so differently in individuals. Its introspective approach lacked the necessary awareness of socialization factors. This phenomenological fixation and proximity to philosophical issues was the prevailing tradition in Germany at the time. This tradition also influenced the Jesuit professor Leonhard Gilen, who delivered the lecture on Lersch. He himself had published a study on *Das Gewissen bei Jugendlichen* (The Moral Conscience of the Young; 1956), in which he analyzed the written responses of school students to five open questions on their experience of conscience: an empirical rather than introspective procedure, in other words? Certainly, but it was one devoid of any correlation with other parameters. The author contented himself with the conclusion that the conscience is a disposition that includes both cognitive and emotional processes and is concerned with the realization of ethical values. Here, the individual has become aware of the demands these values place upon the individual. But the depth of this awareness varies from one person to another.

The book by theologian Karl Girgensohn, *Der seelische Aufbau des religiösen Erlebens* (The Mental Structure of Religious Experience; 1921), once the object of much attention and probably brought to our notice by Gilen, was also geared entirely toward demonstrating that the specific features of religious experience lie neither in sensations of pleasure or aversion nor ideas and volitional acts, but in its cognitive contents and the involvement of the ego. To this end (deploying the Würzburg school's [Oswald Külpe] experimental introspection method) he described how fourteen individuals reacted to the religious texts with which he had presented them.

The influential treatise by theologian and scholar of religion Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (1924 [1917]), which I heard about and dipped into constantly, was if anything even more strongly fixated on a phenomenological definition of the "nature" of religious experience. As is well known, he saw this nature as lying in the experience of being overwhelmed by the sacred, which was both horrifying (*tremendum*) and attractive (*fascinosum*). Otto left cultural and biographical factors almost entirely out of his account and took the view that the sole task of psychology of religion was to describe development from primitive to higher states of this "a priori category." Until the late 1960s, psychologists and theologians constantly quoted Otto's concept of numinosity like a dogma whenever they turned to the "nature" of religious experience. I always found this idea contrived, however, and felt that it conflicted with my own religious experience, which lacked this dramatic "harmony of contrast." (There is almost no mention of numinous horror in the several thousand responses analyzed by Hardy (1980).)

Furthermore, I always felt dissatisfied when psychologists and theologians (often with reference to theologian and philosopher of religion Friedrich Schleiermacher) spoke as though religious emotions simply emerged in people's consciousness "just like that" in much the same way as physical sensations, in the absence of (ontogenetically) antecedent religious socialization and (actual-genetic) cognitive triggers, however intuitive these might be. So I felt a sense of liberation when I read a cautious critique of Otto's notion of numinosity for the first time in an acquaintance's habilitation thesis in the philosophy of religion (Splett, 1971). And it was like emerging from swathes of mist when, basing myself on new theories of emotion, I later described religious emotions as complex reactive patterns featuring cognitive, neurophysiological, motivational, and expressive components, and showed that religious emotions differ crucially from other emotions because of their cognitive components. (On the history of psychology of religion in the German-speaking world, see Belzen, 2009; Henning, 2003; Wulff, 1997.)

## My Psychological "Initiation" in Brussels

After completing my degree in philosophy, I taught German, history, and religion to students between 10 and 14 years of age at a Jesuit high school during a 3-year training period. I then studied theology in Lyon for eight semesters from 1963 to 1967. During this period I was interested in the question, answered by theologians

in various ways, of whether and how God's love through the Holy Spirit ("grace") may be experienced, but the texts I read on the subject, chiefly the work of Karl Rahner, were exclusively theological in nature.

It was not until the first part of my doctorate at the Institut International de Catéchèse et de Pastorale "Lumen Vitae" in Brussels (1967–1968) that I experienced a genuine "psychological turn." Within the framework of my doctorate in philosophy, my superiors wanted me to help our young Jesuits deal with the "media," whose importance people were becoming aware of at the time. But there were as yet no established curricula in this area. In order to obtain my doctorate despite this, I studied at the institute in Brussels mentioned above for one year, while also attending an evening class at the journalists' school. I then studied for another year at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, gaining my doctorate in theology there in 1970 with a study in comparative religious education: I examined how guides to religious instruction in French, Dutch, and German refer to the Trinity and put forward guidelines in light of theology and psychology of religion.

Brussels, 1967–1968: here I received my "initiation" in a psychology of religion that was intended for course participants with an interest in religious education, but that also contained the seed of an independent, empirically oriented discipline. The "hierophant," the revealer of mysteries, was the Jesuit André Godin, assisted by confrère Pierre Ranwez and Antoine Vergote, diocesan priest and Professor of Religious Psychology at the Catholic University of Leuven.

André Godin (1915–1997), one of my coresidents in the Jesuit community housed within the institute, gained a Master of Arts in psychology at Fordham University (New York) after completing a degree in philosophy and theology there and practiced as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist; he was also a member of the Belgian Society for Psychoanalysis and the Association Internationale pour l'Étude Médico-Psychologique et Religieuse. He was Professor of Religious Psychology at the Gregorian University in Rome, Laval University in Canada, the Institut Supérieur de Science Religieuse in Charleroi, Belgium and at our Lumen Vitae Institute in Brussels (Jaspard & Corveleyn, 1997). With the *Cahiers de Lumen Vitae – Psychologie Religieuse* series, which he edited, he established a rallying point in Europe for the still young discipline of empirical psychology of religion. He digested the current specialist literature in English, Italian, Dutch, French, and German, opening the door to a new world for me. I still view his incisive book reviews as exemplary.

His books were concerned chiefly with pastoral counseling, life within religious groups, psychological disorders and the psychology of the religious vocation. I was a no more than a cursory reader of these publications in pastoral psychology; but I studied every word of his "Cours de psychologie religieuse," only fragments of which have been published (Godin, 1967), and still preserve the hectographed text like a precious incunabulum.

In the first part of the *Psychologie Religieuse Générale* (later: *structurale*) – to some extent in the German tradition, but also going beyond it – he dealt with topics in "phenomenological and philosophical psychology." Drawing on Max Scheler's

philosophy of values and Rudolf Otto's concept of numinosity, but also making connections with contemporary ideas such as Abraham Maslow's "peak experiences" and Mircea Eliade's "hierophanies," he asked how we ought to describe individual (1) "experiences of the sacred" and how these consolidate into (2) "religious attitudes" as well as how they relate to (3) specifically "Christian experience." As did Pierre Rousselot and Jean Mouroux, he defined "Christian experience" in strictly theological and neo-Thomist fashion as the orientation (*décentration*) of our volition toward participation in the Trinitarian life of God thanks to the effect of God's grace. On this view, the presence of this grace could neither be experienced through introspection as a specific content of consciousness nor could it be attained through one's own desire (in prayer, for example); the Catholic Church rejected such intuitionism. But what could be experienced and was accessible to psychological research was "activity" (or behavior as we would probably put it today) oriented toward the "signs of salvation" through faith, hope, and love: in the biblical witness of God's Word become human, in the sacraments, in the Church as the mystical Body of Christ. Here, according to Godin, "positive" (= empirical) psychology of religion could show how the experience of the sacred could develop into mature Christian experience, the stages involved, and the psychosocial obstacles that must be overcome.

I found the distinction between what could and could not be experienced, grace and psyche, unsatisfactory, and at this point in my copy a large question mark can still be seen in the margin; but it at least turned us young theologians' attention to the "biopsychological" and "social" aspects of religious life. (At the institute I also attended an introduction to the sociology of religion, which was something new for me and an important change of perspective from theology and philosophy.)

Having clarified the fundamentals, the second part of Godin's script, "Psychologie religieuse positive," was intended to collate observations on the development of religiosity in childhood and adolescence with the maximum of empirical rigor. Without offering a comprehensive system, he dealt with the following key issues: (1) the *anthropomorphic* characteristics of children's ideas of God: here, in the psychoanalytic tradition, he assumed that the child develops his concept of God as a function of his views of his parents. Following an article by Joseph Mac Avoy (1953) he also wished to show how undesirable developments in the spirituality of adults (scrupulosity, prayer rather than initiative, excessive worship of the Virgin Mary, false guilt feelings, and salvific anxiety) might be due to unresolved crises in the oral, anal, and oedipal phases. But most of his information came from empirical studies of children's notions of God, particularly those by Henri Clavier, Jean-Pierre Deconchy, and Ronald Goldman. (2) The tendency, in line with the *animism* described by Jean Piaget, to conceive of God's activity in the world as material punishment or protection: he had carried out his own investigation on this in collaboration with B. van Roey; (3) the proclivity for *magical thinking*, which he had also researched (with Soeur Marthe); and (4) young people's tendency toward *moralism*, *doubts about their faith*, and *prejudices* (in light of the studies of G. W. Allport, among others).



## **In the School of André Godin, Antoine Vergote, and Pierre Ranwez**

On Freud's attempt to explain the idea of God as resulting from the powerless individual's need for an omnipotent father and to expose it as an illusion, his view was that this may apply to ethnological development and to a piety anchored in mere wishful thinking ("pleasure principle"), but the God who revealed Himself in Jesus, who submitted to the laws of His Creation, died on the Cross, forgave His enemies and does not answer egocentric prayers, by no means meets our psychological need for protection. Rather, all He offers us is His forgiving infinite love. Education must help overcome the tendencies toward undesirable developments such as anthropomorphism, animism, magic, and egocentrism, brought to our attention by psychology, in order to achieve a mature Christian experience and outlook.

Here Godin linked the psychoanalytic perspective, which begins by examining possible pathological developments in oneself or others, with an ambitious spiritual ideal deeply rooted in his Catholic faith and capable of building a bridge between this faith and psychoanalysis. He was also completely open to empirical research. The latter influenced me more enduringly than the former.

I attended Antoine Vergote's lectures on the psychological reasons for atheism (see Vergote, 1967); I also studied his later publications in depth. His attempt to describe contemporary religious experience on the basis of interviews with religious academics was stimulating, and for a number of years I adopted his distinction between "prereligious" ("spiritual in a broad sense" as we might put it today) and religious experiences. The broad range of international literature referenced in his work from Rudolf Otto through Gerardus van der Leeuw to Clifford Geertz was impressive, and his reflections on the motives of religiosity (based broadly on Allport, 1950/1973) in his *Psychologie Religieuse* from 1966 supplemented Godin's lecture. But his attempts to portray the mother relationship and the mother symbol as a prerequisite for religious (or prereligious) experience and the father relationship and father symbol as a precondition for the recognition of God as the Wholly Other in accordance with the reality principle, seemed to me to rely too greatly on speculative theories of depth psychology.

While Godin carried out empirical-quantitative studies, Pierre Ranwez, who investigated the religiosity of three- to seven-year-olds, worked with another method that was "qualitative" in a special sense and that I too was later to deploy. For many years, Ranwez had talked with parents in family groups about how one might guide young children toward prayer and faith without overwhelming them with religious doctrine. At what point do children go beyond merely repeating what they have heard to understanding, in their own (which?) way, what is meant by "God" and when are they capable of an emotional response to this? This is a fascinating question, not only in terms of cognitive development, but also in terms of the possible motives touched upon by religiosity. To answer it, Ranwez studied spontaneous remarks by children, as reported to him by parents and educators, because, and this was his objection to interview-based studies, if one asks young children questions

in a study, they may easily be influenced by this context. But as they are unable to adequately express certain religious feelings even in spontaneous remarks, one must try to unearth them in later recollections: in adults' memories of childhood. These memories are colored by the adult's point of view, however, there are common elements to be found in them. Ranwez also impressed me greatly on a human level. He was humble, did his best to get by despite his poor health, which hindered the production of lengthy publications, and when I spoke to him about young children, I had the impression that he understood their inner feelings, of both a general and religious nature, better than anyone else.

Whether it was during a conversation at table or while we were washing the dishes together I'm not quite sure, but toward the end of my stay in Brussels I once mentioned to André Godin that it would be useful if he would turn his academic knowledge into a practically oriented book for religious educators. He replied, "That's a task for you youngsters."

## **My Long and Winding Route to the Psychology of Religion**

It was in fact my interest in religious education that first drove me toward my later study of religious psychology, however, right from the start I wished to place religious education on a psychological foundation. My dissertation itself included a chapter on "The Religious Psychology of the Trinity Catechesis," in which, with the pride of the student who has paid attention in class, I included what I had learned from Godin about anthropomorphism and so on. Looking back, it seems to me that although I was concerned with both religious education and its psychological foundations as well as with "pure," nonapplied psychology of religion from the beginning of my work as a lecturer, from 1970 to 1980 it was the psychology of religious education and then psychology of religion that stood center stage for me. The ironic explanation might be that I needed twenty years to attain the maturity and experience necessary to the psychology of religion. In reality, this long period of hesitation was due chiefly to the fact that, in the 1970s, both research in the psychology of religion, and I myself, were still very uncertain quantities.

The empirical psychology of religion, to which I decided to devote myself as the years went by, was still highly fragmentary at the time and took a long time to gain momentum. And me? I gained my Dr. Theol. in 1969/1970 and started teaching at the "Hochschule für Philosophie," where I have been based ever since (the college moved from the suburb of Pullach to the center of Munich in 1971). Apart from my philosophical, theological, and pedagogical education, I had merely attended the above-mentioned lectures about Lersch, during my philosophy degree, and the lectures in Brussels as part of my specialist training in religious education; I did not have a degree in psychology. I had, however, read a great deal as an autodidact, and this I had discussed with a confrère who was a qualified psychologist and trained in behavior therapy and client-centered psychotherapy. I felt a pleasing sense of confirmation when, despite these limitations, I was later invited to attend several conferences

of “trained” psychologists and my book *Religionspsychologie* (1992/2007) was used in the university seminars of religious studies scholars and psychologists. (I have never taken part in international conferences such as that organized by the European Psychologists of Religion, as I can only read English but not speak it.)

I held practical seminars on journalism for ten years at the “Hochschule für Philosophie,” a philosophical faculty run by the Jesuit order awarding officially recognized degrees. This was the only class with a predetermined theme. I was able to decide on the content of all other lectures and seminars myself. The only requirement was that they be among those sciences classified as “part of philosophy.” I chose religious education and psychology of religion. Neither my superiors within the order nor any other Church official compelled me to do so, then or subsequently. Neither did they obstruct my activities or lay down what I should or should not include. Neither subject was obligatory for our students, but in the 1970s and 1980s the interest in psychology was so great that my lectures were always well attended, with students not only from our college, but also from the university’s Protestant and Catholic theology faculty. Very few of them wanted to take an examination, but came (their motivation entirely “intrinsic”) out of curiosity. They were a stimulating audience. My lectures on the psychology of religion probably helped them clarify their own spirituality, although it was not pedagogical or normative in orientation.

## What is “Religious Educational Psychology”?

Within the discipline of religious education, I tackled “methods of religious instruction, youth work and adult education,” and the resulting book went through ten editions. But from the outset I concentrated on psychological issues of religious development and education, an endeavor I first attempted to sum up, after a good 10 years, in the book *Religionspädagogische Psychologie des Kleinkind-, Schul- und Jugendalters* (Religious Educational Psychology of Infants, School Children and Adolescents; 1981/2000). A grateful student, I immediately sent it to my mentors, A. Godin and A. Vergote.

The first part of this book, which I was delighted to discover was also being used by a lecturer training Muslim religious education teachers in Turkey, explores the experiential beginnings and learning stages of emotionally grounded, mature religiosity. I saw these beginnings (1) in the capacity of children and young people to meditate in a general sense and to develop a prayerful dialogue on this basis; (2) in the development of (prereligious) basic trust in the sense of the first developmental task identified by E. H. Erikson, which then develops into a religious trust, a sense of being affirmed unconditionally by God; (3) in the development of a positive (pre-religious) attitude to life, which develops into consenting gratitude to the Creator; and (4) in the (humanitarian-prereligious) prosocial sense that develops into “Mitlieben” (Max Scheler) or loving participation in the universal grace of God.

How did I identify these beginnings? I never based my work on a comprehensive theory, but for many years, alongside observations of parents, kindergarten teachers, and teachers of religion (in line with the method I had learnt from Ranwez) I collected adults' childhood religious recollections. Through a kind of clustering, I considered which emotions, motives, and developmental tasks of four-to-twenty-year-olds were positively addressed by religious socialization. At further training events for religious teachers, after establishing a conducive atmosphere, I invited the participants to note down (anonymously) "childhood religious experiences that left a particularly deep impression on me" and then commented on some of these reports. I also cited examples from autobiographical texts, from P. Teilhard de Chardin or Julien Green, for example. In light of a number of such "key experiences," I then attempted to reconstruct the learning stages and educational influences through which "mature" religiosity may develop. But I also sought to make connections with theories of emotional and cognitive development, with S. Freud's and H. Kohut's theory of narcissism and with E. H. Erikson's theory of the human life cycle and the stage-based theories of cognitive or moral development of J. Piaget and L. Kohlberg.

In the many further training sessions I ran, initially for kindergarten teachers and later for religious education teachers, such memories were an excellent means of describing the religious experience of children and young people in vivid terms. They also offered a corrective to the many publications in which, at a time when religion was so often subject to criticism, adults merely described how they had suffered as a result of their religious education, none more than psychoanalyst Tilman Moser, who produced a highly emotional and critical account of his extremely narrow Pietist education in his widely read book *Gottesvergiftung* (Poisoned by God; 1976).

Of course, the possible shortcomings of religious development and education, of which A. Godin had made us aware, received their fair share of attention. They were the focus of the second part of my *Religionspädagogische Psychologie*, which dealt with tendencies toward affective and cognitive transference in people's image of God, examining God as a fear-laden or wishful fantasy and artificialist animistic notions of protection and punishment as well as materialist patterns of thought. These ideas might well have been declared an "import from Brussels," for such applications of Piaget's developmental theory to religious development were as yet unknown in Germany.

But it was "imports from the United States" that I relied on in another chapter, in which I linked prosociality research, still largely ignored in Europe, with issues of the development of conscience and considered issues in learning theory by drawing on Albert Bandura's social learning theory. I was first prompted to delve more deeply into behavioral psychology/theories of learning by a conversation with kindergarten teachers who had been greatly influenced by learning theory as a result of their training. Afterward, I asked myself: is it not possible to understand the individual's positive inner experience in prayer, meditation, a church service, or prosocial behavior, as *self-reinforcement*, which explains why the behavior persists?

## A Kind of Resource Orientation

With respect to the first part of this psychology of religious education, from a modern-day perspective we might say that I systematically sought out examples in which children and young people might discover faith as a personal resource. This went down particularly well with the younger teachers, who had been unsettled by the general climate of religious critique and were questioning the traditional language of the Church and an overly cognitive approach to instruction. But my study of the religious experience of the four- to twelve-year-old child also had a highly stimulating effect on my personal spirituality. It compelled me to think carefully about how those things that religious doctrine expresses in an abstract, cognitive, and predominantly theocentric manner might become emotionally significant, how they might become, as it were, a hot rather than cold form of cognition. In other words, I had to consider to which existentially significant questions the “Good News” offered an answer. I was also, and remain, impressed by the way in which young children’s questions about “where things come from,” studied by J. Piaget and W. Stern, reveal a dynamic of the human mind that, extending from pre-causal, especially artificialist attempts at explanation, all the way to research in the natural sciences and beyond, leads to the question of where the world itself comes from.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the applied subject of educational psychology (*Pädagogische Psychologie*) has developed within the disciplines of psychology and education. In line with this, I wanted to see the establishment of a “religious educational psychology” (*Religionspädagogische Psychologie*) within the field of religious education that would carry out systematic research and sensitize trainee religious educators to psychological realities. That didn’t happen. Although my text has been used as a textbook at a fair number of educational establishments and was published in a fifth, fully revised edition in 2000, many religious education professors have found their thirst for psychological knowledge slaked by the structural-genetic stage theories of J. W. Fowler and F. Oser and P. Gmünder. These ignore the findings of the empirical psychology of religion and are, I believe, problematic methodologically and prone to simplistic conclusions. Inasmuch as it proceeds empirically, religious education in the German-speaking world tends to draw on social-scientific issues and studies and suffers, in my view, from a severe lack of psychology.

### “This Lecture Is Cautiously Entitled ‘Questions on the Psychology of Religion’”

As a by-product of my work on the book *Religionspädagogische Psychologie*, I became more aware of publications in the psychology of religion. In addition, in 1974 I began to hold seminars in which I guided the participants to note down

anonymously any observations of themselves or others that they might interpret as “religious experiences,” and to analyze them with my help. I also tackled the topic of the “meaning of life,” with which people were greatly concerned at the time, and in 1975, in collaboration with a confrère, who took on the philosophical section, published a paperback that discussed this subject from a partly psychological perspective. All of this encouraged me to offer lectures on my second “elective,” psychology of religion, in 1979. For 12 years, I began them with the statement: “This lecture is cautiously entitled ‘Questions on Psychology of Religion.’” Only in 1991/1992 did I feel ready to turn this into the book *Religionspsychologie*, which appeared in a third revised edition in 2007 and has been translated into Spanish and Polish.

Why “cautiously”? First, because 1979 was not yet the right time for an overall presentation of empirical findings. After *Psychologie Religieuse* by A. Vergote, published in 1966, and the overview by J. E. Dittes from 1969, it was only in the 1980s that overall surveys such as those by C. D. Batson and W. L. Ventis (1982), M. J. Meadow and R. D. Kahoe (1984), and Spilka et al. (1985) saw the light of day once again, if we disregard *The Social Psychology of Religion* by M. Argyle and B. Beit-Hallahmi (1975).

But I was also proceeding “cautiously” because I was as yet unable to appraise the various psychological schools with a sufficient degree of certainty. I first read practically everything that psychologists had written about religiosity: Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Leopold Szondi, Viktor E. Frankl, Abraham Maslow, Erich Fromm. A series of lectures for our philosophy students, which I intended to introduce them to the great schools of behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and humanistic psychology, gradually sharpened my awareness of the differences in their scientific status. I realized that the psychological university departments recognize psychoanalysis, which dominated public opinion in Germany at the time like a superpower and which many academics equated with psychology, only with regard to those elements that are empirically verifiable (the medical departments are more generous in this respect). I also understood that C. G. Jung’s theory of archetypes, which many theologians celebrated as a liberation from the threat posed by Freud’s critique of religion, and as a new way in to the Bible and symbolism, failed to satisfy the scientific requirements of “academic psychology.”

Just how pluralistic can the psychology of religion be? To simplify somewhat, it may be anchored in phenomenology, psychoanalysis, object-relations theory, Jungian thought, cultural psychology, or an empirical behavioral psychology approach. What I wanted was a psychology of religion that does *not* operate on a para-scientific level, either in the sense of devotional literature or critique of religion, but which is compatible with the empirical behavioral psychology carried on in our universities’ psychological departments. This would be a “mainstream psychology of religion” comprehensible to anyone who engages in scientific thinking, one that is nurtured in the universities and is no longer treated as a poor relation.

## Unfavorable Conditions for the Psychology of Religion in Germany

How could this goal be achieved? In the German-speaking world of the 1980s, the only circumstances under which a professor in the psychological departments would examine the topic of religiosity was if a brave doctoral student expressed a sustained interest in it. Between 1980 and 1990, only three dissertations in the psychology of religion were produced at German universities, and as late as 1990, of 177 academics surveyed in 14 psychological departments, 59% stated that they knew of no scientific psychological studies of religiosity (Maskallis, 1990). For many psychologists, the topic of religion was taboo. A professor of psychology once admitted to me that he had never been an adherent of psychoanalysis in a scientific sense, but had long unquestioningly adopted Freud's negative views on religion. At a training session in group dynamics run by a student of Fritz Perls, which I attended in 1973, I was asked whether "psychology of religion," in other words religion and psychology, was not a contradiction in terms.

Another reason why religiosity was placed under a taboo (apart from the influence of Freud) was presumably the fact that, along with leading sociologists, many psychologists assumed that religion would inevitably die out as the modernization of society progressed. (Tellingly, the sociology of religion section of the German Association for Sociology was dissolved in the critical 1970s, but re-established in 1995 and has been very active since then.) Yet to this day, in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, psychologists fear for their scientific reputation if they take on the subject of religion, partly because in these places, to a far greater degree than in the United States, religion is associated almost automatically with "Church," such that anyone who investigates it immediately fears that she will be viewed as a representative of that institution.

I could expect no help from the pastoral psychology practiced in some theological faculties, which has had its own journal (*Wege zum Menschen* ["Routes to the Human Being"]) since 1948. It was not interested in the empirical psychology of religion, which was insufficiently applied in character, and drew inspiration chiefly from psychoanalysis and client-centered psychotherapy.

So I was dependent on intellectual imports. These I found in the empirical research, inspired by Gordon W. Allport, Charles Y. Glock, and Rodney Stark, that flourished in the United States from around 1970 onward as the "second wave of psychology of religion." I've felt indebted to this tradition ever since. But how do imported goods reach the consumer? One logistical advantage was that the philosophical faculty and the Jesuit college in which I live are just a ten-minute walk away from the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität and Bavarian State Library, the latter being one of the largest universal libraries in Europe, holding 50,000 journals. Assuming a radius of 600 m, the place where I live probably has more books per square inch than any other location in Germany. At times, I have worked in seventeen different departmental and other libraries in Munich, and as the year draws to a close (before they go off to the bookbinder) I still take a look at around twenty

journals to check whether they have published any studies in the psychology of religion. Each year, in the days before PsycINFO and PsycIndexPlus, I read the entries in the *Psychological Abstracts* under the keywords religion, God concept, meditation, and so on. "Someone's got to do it," I say to myself.

## **Explaining, in a Psychologically Relevant Way, as Much as Possible of the Variety of Forms Taken by Religiosity**

For a number of years I was at a loss as to what to do with the material I had gradually accumulated. As it was not possible to proceed on the basis of a comprehensive theory, I returned once again to my "cluster method" and attempted to arrange observations into topics. My desk was soon covered with stacks of texts, not only the results of statistical studies but also case studies, including some drawn from my pastoral dialogues, and their pages often featured questions I had jotted down for further consideration. What diversity! Did not every believer have his own way of thinking about and experiencing God and the Absolute? The scrupulous compulsive and the lax, the socially aware and egocentric, the naïvely faithful, the reflective and the doubter? G. Allport (1950/1973, p. 30) rightly stated that we must acknowledge "the one disturbing truth that there are as many varieties of religious experience as there are religiously inclined mortals upon the earth."

Taking this fact as my lodestar, my aim was to *explain, in a psychologically relevant way, as much as possible of the variety of forms taken by religiosity*. What does this variety consist in, and how does it arise? This I linked with another key concern: I wanted to bring out as many thematic connections as possible amid the confusing mass of individual findings and points of view accumulated by an empirical but rather unsystematic research. My aim was to replace this jungle with a more manageable park. But how?

First, I had to get beyond a purely phenomenological analysis in the style of K. Girgensohn and R. Otto and pay the necessary attention to socialization and cultural factors. The latest developments in behaviorism seemed to me to provide the most plausible framework in this regard. Its strength, of course, was to explain behavior in light of "reinforcement" by stimuli and environmental factors. But neo-behaviorism, which no longer took its lead from animal experiments in the style of J. B. Watson and B. F. Skinner, but from the observations of behavioral therapy and social psychology, had now discovered that human behavior may rest on "self-control" and that this depends on cognitive and emotional processes. Even B. F. Skinner once referred to "self-reinforcement," and a cognitive behavioral therapy gradually took shape. Albert Bandura (1977; 1986) brought together basic insights of this "cognitive turn," along with the findings of his own research on "learning through modeling," to create his *social cognitive learning theory*, which I modified somewhat, supplementing it with the theorem of plausibility structures put forward by sociologists of knowledge Berger & Luckmann (1969).



## From Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory to Self-Socialization and Emotional Regulation

My assumption is that religiosity is a culturally molded form of experience, knowledge, and behavior that is dependent on stimuli from the environment but that these stimuli are processed individually. *External socialization* through the family, community of faith, significant others, and media may influence a young person or adult through a variety of social learning processes: (1) through modeling-based learning, (2) learning through instruction/information, and (3) learning through external reinforcement and social confirmation (plausibilization). These influences not only differ in line with a given socializing environment, but are also selectively digested by the individual through processes of self-socialization, depending on the individual's own reflections, individual responsiveness (motives), and satisfactory or unsatisfactory experiences, in other words through (1) learning through understanding of information received, (2) learning through one's own thinking and action, and (3) learning through self-reinforcement (Grom, 1992/2007, pp. 263–271).

Behaviorism had brought about a "cognitive turn" within me, an exciting process of realization that I outlined in a 1982 journal article (Grom, 1982), and this had occurred, as it were, just in time. Favored by the "blessings of the late birth," I experienced this turn as a liberation from multiple impediments:

- Unlike the stage theories of moral and religious development derived from Piaget and Kohlberg, a social cognitive learning theory à la Bandura made it possible to take adequate account of cultural and socializing influences without neglecting individual reception.
- Including these learning processes allowed one to describe these influences in a more nuanced way than did many sociologists with their general references to "socialization."
- Unlike radical behaviorism and psychoanalysis, a focus on the preconditions of self-socialization could also do justice to the significance of religious convictions (cognitions) within the dynamics of *emotional and behavioral regulation as a whole*. Religiosity (and the experience of the moral conscience) is no longer viewed in isolation as the unfolding of a highly specific "ability," but is instead understood as a specific dimension of emotional and behavioral regulation as a whole, regulation that is geared toward maintaining or enhancing subjective well-being. It is viewed as a dimension oriented (through self-observation, self-assessment, and self-reinforcement or self-criticism) toward internalized *religious goals concerning meaning and "oughts"* (Grom, 1992/2007, pp. 30–32).

From this perspective, within the full range of human life, "religious" means that experience, thinking, and behavior that, in terms of its cognitive components, takes on a superhuman and transcendent reality, irrespective of whether this is conceived in polytheistic, monotheistic, pantheistic, or other terms. Religiosity is not a special dimension of the person but his or her religiously motivated experience, thinking, and behaving. Sociologists would call this a "substantial" concept of religion. It seems to me that this concept has served the psychology of religion well. It has

prevented the inclusion within its remit of every type of supermaterial experience that might fall under the extremely broad category “spiritual,” each and every experience of meaning, union with nature, satisfaction with one’s life, self-esteem, and so on, even when reported by declared atheists. If it were to go down that road, the psychology of religion would lose any sense of definition, expanding to include personality psychology, psychology of health, and quality of life research.

## **The Triple Variety of Motives, Emotions, and States of Consciousness**

Let us return to the jungle in which I wandered lost for so long before writing *Religionspsychologie* (1992). It gradually began to thin out as a result of the above clarifications, and I now turned to the question of how I might provide a satisfying overall picture of as much as possible of those things which, from around 1960, had been brought together under the terms “religious beliefs,” “religious attitudes,” “religious experience,” and “religious coping,” while explaining as much as possible of the individual variety of religious experience, thinking, and behavior. After all, we cannot describe the religiosity of every believer. But in my view, the concepts mentioned above could all be interpreted as components of processes of moral self-control, of coping in order to maintain one’s subjective well-being, and efforts to enhance it, and all these processes were determined by needs, endeavors, concerns, and interests; in short, by motives, motives that influence our experience, thinking, and behavior in both the secular and religious sphere. So I wanted to explain religiosity as a *transcendence-related way* of feeling and acting in light of those motives of importance to the individual.

Which motives are we dealing with here? The common distinction between an extrinsically and intrinsically motivated religious orientation seemed to me too global (Grom, 1993). But Allport had already provided a loose outline (1950/1973) of various intrinsic motives, and the attribution theory put forward by Spilka et al. (1985) also considered as motives of attributions, which may be religious, a general desire to seek meaning in the world, an attempt to control and predict events, and the desire to enhance self-esteem. There is no recognized comprehensive list or theory of human motives within academic psychology, although a number of specific motives are subject to closer investigation. Drawing on these, I showed the individual forms that religiosity may take, depending on which intrinsic motives it addresses, namely:

1. The disposition to moral self-control – as a flexible nonpathologic conscientiousness or as obsessive-compulsiveness.
2. *The desire to control important life events or to control feelings of fear, hopelessness, frustration, and mourning emotionally (modes of religious coping).* Here, the religious coping research initiated by Kenneth Pargament went a long way to helping me understand psychologically those things referred to in religious language as “appeals for strength” and so on, and to grasp more precisely the influence of faith with respect to critical life events and chronic stresses.

3. *The longing for positive self-esteem.* How can a particular idea of God influence processes of self-evaluation positively or negatively? And, in line with consistency theory, must we not also assume the existence of a reverse influence, namely that because individuals have low self-esteem they tend to view God as generally cold, judicial, and severe? Do a narcissistic awareness of one's status as chosen and religious fanaticism develop on the basis of "supervalent ideas" that serve to confirm one's self-esteem?
4. *The disposition to gratitude and veneration, that is, the disposition to attribute the source of gratifications to a divine benevolence and to attribute a supreme venerability to God or the Absolute.* In the 1980s, empirical psychologists did not yet refer to gratitude, let alone veneration; largely on my own initiative, I tried to describe and clarify this dual motive.
5. *The disposition to prosocial experience and behavior.* Here I was able to consult prosociality research, particularly the *decision-making model of altruism* presented by Schwartz and Howard (1981), in order to investigate under which (demanding) conditions religiosity may motivate prosocial feelings and behavior and what might impede this influence. Other questions included: what is the relationship between religiosity and a propensity for prejudice or religiously motivated violence?
6. *The interest in ethical and metaphysical cognition and the desire to establish logical coherence in religious beliefs.* The differences between a reflective, emotional, intuitive, and dogmatic-fundamentalist religious outlook.

So in this core chapter I attempted to explain the diversity of religiosity in light of the (1) variety of motives that ensure the internalization (self-socialization) and further development, which always takes an individual form, of social religious influences. In another chapter I supplemented this by examining religiosity in connection with the (2) diverse range of well-balanced or disturbed emotions (religious psychotechnics, rapture, depression, schizophrenic delusions), and in a third chapter I dealt with religiosity (3) in light of altered states of consciousness (visions, mediumism, possession, experiences of mystical union). Finally, I provided an overview of studies of the relationship between religiosity and subjective well-being (absence of depression or anxiety, life satisfaction, happiness).

In my opinion, there is no comprehensive theory that illuminates all the key phenomena of religious experience, thinking, and behavior, because religiosity is too complex. But I was perhaps able to show that certain theoretical approaches provide fairly adequate explanations of specific spheres of the religious, such that they complement rather than contradict one another. In this "coherent eclecticism" (G. W. Allport), I made use of concepts gleaned from learning theories, psychoanalysis (here and there), the psychology of motivation, emotion and cognition, phenomenology and psychiatry, and neodissociation theory.

My particular contribution to the psychology of religion has perhaps been to provide an overview of numerous observations in light of the triple diversity of motives, emotions, and states of consciousness, an overview that goes beyond the additive enumeration of concepts and findings. I suppose I have also tried to interpret experiences of "revelation" and mystical union (*unio mystica*), drawing on the

phenomenological-psychiatric categories put forward by schizophrenia expert Christian Scharfetter (2002), as changes in ego activity and ego demarcation, an approach that met with his explicit approval.

In 1995, I managed to win over two young qualified psychologists to the daring idea of helping me construct a questionnaire to survey religiosity on the basis of the six motives mentioned above. The first version, an analysis of which we presented at the 1996 conference of the German Psychology Association (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie*), still included items on extrinsic orientation, although almost no-one in our German sample professed to this. The second version of this *Münchener Motivationspsychologisches Religiositäts-Inventar* (MMRI), which would never have gotten off the ground without the involvement of Christian Zwingmann (now Professor of Empirical Social Research in Bochum) and Edgar Schmitz (then Professor of Psychology at the Technical University of Munich), consisted solely of scales on motives of intrinsic religiosity. Factor analysis of the responses of 1,058 individuals showed a sometimes high degree of intercorrelation between the adopted motive scales (Zwingmann et al., 2004). Two scales on the desire to control important life events tallied most closely with our assumptions; they have been used on several occasions by students working on their dissertations. But it is obviously difficult and requires a great deal of self-reflection and openness to survey motives and interests through questionnaires.

## Toward an “Autonomous” Mainstream Psychology of Religion

I had the first edition of *Religionspsychologie* published by two church presses, one Protestant and one Catholic. I had the feeling that their customers might know me from my religious education books, whereas I would have been unknown to readers of a specialist psychology publisher. But the book was aimed just as much at non-theologians and has probably been used more in religious studies and psychology workshops than in theological ones.

That’s just how I wanted it. What I would like to see is an “*autonomous*” *psychology of religion* pursued within the psychological departments. (This may also happen in religious studies courses if trained psychologists take on this task.) As a field of applied psychology – in a similar way to ethnopsychology, family, or clinical psychology – a psychology of religion of this kind should examine how religiosity influences experience and behavior, and on which psychosocial and intrapsychic conditions this influence depends, with the questions, constructs, and methods of empirical psychology. As a type of psychology, it restricts itself to these subjective conditions of religiosity and asserts no competence with regard to objective truth claims, leaving that discussion to the philosophy of religion and theology. In light of the psychohygienic and therapeutic approach of psychology, the psychology of religion must merely assess whether specific religious attitudes and behaviors promote or impair subjective well-being and peaceful coexistence. The former has already been happening in pleasingly sophisticated fashion for around twenty years under the aegis of psychology of health (Koenig et al. 2001).

Academic psychology in the German-speaking world should overcome its inhibitions about the topic of religiosity and accept research in the psychology of religion as a task proper to psychology. In Germany, after all, 42% of the population state (2006) that they “get comfort and strength from religion” (Köcher, 2009). The education of psychological counselors, psychotherapists, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and doctors, who work with religious clients, should endow them with the necessary psychological understanding of such a resource, as well as of possible pathological variants. Over the last few decades, psychology has managed to improve knowledge of problems such as burnout, depression, and alcoholism in the helping professions and throughout much of society. In much the same way, it has the potential to break down prejudices and lack of understanding toward believers, but also to encourage believers to reflect psychologically on their outlook, contributing to mutual understanding in a pluralist society.

Is this not a plea for an outside perspective, indeed for “psychology of religion as a trans-religious authority”? Absolutely. As an engaged Catholic I can wholly and completely accept such a vision, as long as the psychology of religion does not exceed its psychohygienic-therapeutic authority and place itself in the service of antireligious forces. We Christians, after all, recognize such an outside perspective and authority whenever we refer a depressive priest to a clinical psychologist.

The pastoral psychology and religious educational psychology of the churches (and one day, hopefully, of some Muslim communities as well) could profit greatly from the expertise of an autonomous psychology of religion, as they could from a fundamental science. When deployed by theologians, psychology of religion can enrich the Christian message and Christian spirituality and help bring them up to date. The Bible and theology, of course, always included worldly wisdom within the framework of the prescientific psychology of their time. Thomas Aquinas, for example, wondered how one might remedy *tristitia*, a depressive state of mind, and one of the eight methods he listed was taking a hot bath. Today, he would no doubt consult a clinical psychologist. I have generally found a great deal of open-mindedness among both teachers of religion and priests, as well as simple worshippers, when I have begun by explaining psychologically what promotes or impedes such things as self-esteem, partnership, social engagement (“brotherly love”), or the ability to cope with loss and illness (“suffering”) before going on to state what inspiration the Gospel of Jesus Christ can offer us here. So psychology has not only helped me become more critically aware of the possible pathologies of religiosity, but also to spell out in a fresh way summary and traditional terms such as “salvation” or “redemption” in a way that brings out their relevance to contemporary experience.

## Modest Future Prospects

While looking for collaborators to work on the MMRI, I got to know half a dozen young qualified psychologists, all of whom were interested in psychology of religion as life’s work and career. I have asked myself whether it might be possible to

establish research in the psychology of religion at my faculty or at a Church-run institute in Germany. But there is a lack of funds for such an initiative, and a lack of appreciation of the value of this specialist discipline. In Germany, one can hardly advise a trainee psychologist who aspires to a university career to write a doctoral thesis in the psychology of religion, as there are no chairs in it. Since around 1990 a number of younger psychologists have presented empirical studies in the psychology of religion, although often on highly specialized issues and without any co-ordination with regard to thematic priorities. In 1994, at a conference of the German Psychology Association, a working group in the psychology of religion was formed for the first time. It is no doubt because of this that the German Psychology Association discovered the field of “psychology of religion” and included it within its classification of subjects. None of this resulted in a boom in the psychology of religion. In the German-speaking world, the field will probably long remain a kind of personal hobby and sideline. Yet over the last few years, religion has once again become a significant topic of sociological, political science and historical research and of public discourse, and perhaps academic psychology, with all its expertise, might grow tired of standing apart from this. So there is at least a chance that students who wish to write a dissertation in the psychology of religion within a psychological department will be encouraged and supported more often than in years past. Modest prospects indeed! But if I am in effect writing my own obituary here, I hope it does not serve as a funeral oration for the psychology of religion in Germany as well.

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## Chapter 6

# “Writing Heavenly Language”: My Research on Pentecostalism and Glossolalia

Nils G. Holm



### Introduction

My scholarly career has comprised thorough explorations of the world’s religions, particularly Christianity. The main approaches that I have used in my research have been of an historical, sociological, and, above all, psychological nature. But my study of theology as a whole has also added much to my understanding of what religion basically is and what it entails. It might be asked what the basis is for my interest in religion. I must thus shortly present my childhood and the background it has provided me pertaining to religiosity.

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N.G. Holm (✉)

Profesor Emeritus, Åbo Akademi University, 20500 Åbo, Finland  
email: nholm@abo.fi



I grew up in the 1940s and 1950s in the Åland Islands in Finland. Åland is an autonomous group of islands within Finland and Swedish is the main language there. The Evangelic Lutheran church is the dominant church, and piety is characterized by a certain “old churchness,” where services, christenings, weddings, and funerals constitute important ingredients. There have also been for more than a hundred years back, free church movements. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the most important of these was the Covenant Church (Sw. *Missionskyrkan*, formerly *Fria Missionsförbundet i Finland*). Its activities covered almost all of Åland and it was not characterized by radicalism or dissociation from the dominant Evangelic Lutheran church. Rather, it supplemented the main church.

In the 1930s, the Pentecostal movement came to the Åland Islands, and it had a significantly more radical approach to the Christian message. It emphasized conversion and speaking in tongues. The more radical free church personalities were attracted to the Pentecostal revival, where miracles and baptism in the Holy Spirit were presented as central to Christianity. The Pentecostal view of the Bible was more or less fundamentalist. The movement strongly felt itself to be a direct extension of the world of the New Testament. A strong apocalyptic view dominated the preaching. Jesus would at any moment return from the skies of heaven and therefore one had to be constantly prepared for the divine encounter. There was hardly any understanding of the historical connections between churches and communities within the Pentecostal movement at that time. Much has changed since then.

During my childhood, my mother was a member of the Covenant Church and my father of the Pentecostal movement, so my religious background was to some extent divided inasmuch as the entire family attended services at both the Covenant Church and the Pentecostal movement. In my teens, the Pentecostal Church came to be my spiritual home. I internalized the whole Pentecostal message and strongly identified with an eschatological and apocalyptic approach. Nevertheless, I did keep a critical trait within me. When ecstatic phenomena appeared in the congregation, I was the one who wanted to be close by and observe everything.

I was also already at an early stage interested in the development of children and young people in these relatively “closed” spiritual contexts. Why did parents not manage to better convey their religious attitudes to the younger generation? Why were there so few of us young ones in the congregation, although many Pentecostals had several children? They were seldom or never seen in the congregational community. I asked myself why the children chose a path different from their parents when it came to religiosity.

My years at school were mostly a torment, mainly because of the bullying I had to suffer as a free church member. When it was time to apply for studies at a university, the Faculty of Theology at Åbo Akademi University seemed attractive, although it had a reputation of destroying the spiritual faith of the students. The then young pastor of the Pentecostal movement on Åland had studied theology for a few years and probably influenced my choice, even if he did not do so in an obvious way. After much anguish and against my father’s explicit wish, I applied to the Faculty of

Theology and was accepted as a student. An enormous journey of discovery into the extraordinary world of religions was started, a journey that never ends, but has given me so much.

## **My Studies at the Faculty of Theology**

I started my studies in the autumn of 1962. My fellow students were nice and for many years they formed an invaluable base for my personal development. Not least the intensive musical life gave me much joy. I felt at home and could grow as a human being.

I had enthusiastically waited for the opportunity to study the basic biblical languages. Hebrew and Greek proved to be truly interesting languages for me. Now I finally came close to the biblical and early Christian world which was valued so highly in the spiritual world of my childhood. However, it happened in a way that did not meet much understanding in fundamentalist circles. But my intellectual honesty demanded acceptance for my research results. Latin, too, which I mainly studied on my own, has been of great use, not least when it comes to singing sacred choir works in that language.

Church history and systematic theology elucidated the historical lines of development of the churches and the controversial issues within the churches over the years. I gained a much better understanding of why the contents of the confessions of faith look like they do. And the backgrounds of the free church movements, not least Pentecostalism, were also made clear. The Pentecostal movement was not a direct continuation of the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament. Supervised by Bill Widén, Professor of Church History, I began an historical study of the arrival of the Pentecostal movement in Finland. This was a subject he explicitly wished me to explore. My work resulted in a Master's thesis on that very theme (Holm, 1970, 1972). However, I also wrote several other essays on Pentecostalism in the Nordic countries, particularly on its view of the Holy Communion.

The subject called practical theology at Åbo Akademi contains a large amount of literature on pastoral care. This I read with the greatest interest. Here, I came close to a psychological understanding of religion. My immense interest in this was enhanced not least by our visiting teacher in pastoral care, Erik Ewalds. In a way that appealed to me, he provided insights into psychoanalysis and how that could be combined with an understanding of religion. Knowledgeable in depth psychology and a clergyman, Ewalds' courses were uniquely popular among the students for a few years. Here I might say, that I for the first time actually understood what psychology can contribute when it comes to the understanding of religious phenomena. Depth psychology fascinated me and I saw completely new opportunities for its use within research into religion. I have, to a certain extent, returned to the use of depth psychology in my study, *Joels Gud* (Joel's God), which deals with the eccentric Åland artist Joel Pettersson, and in my development of integrated role theory. I return to these later.

## My Studies in the History of Religion at Åbo Akademi University

The history of religion had been introduced as a subject at the Åbo Akademi University, Faculty of Humanities in the early 1960s. The first professor of the subject was Helmer Ringgren from Uppsala, Sweden. His fields of speciality were the Old Testament and the Hellenistic world. His lectures fascinated me greatly. His successor, Sven S. Hartman, was a specialist in early Iranian religion, Zarathustra, and his world. During Hartman's period as professor I learnt a lot within the field of general comparative religion, which was very useful for me when I myself later became a professor. Under his supervision I also approached the psychology of religion. Hjalmar Sundén in Uppsala had published the book *Religionen och Rollerna* (The Religion and Roles) in 1959. This we studied thoroughly during the seminars led by Hartman. He himself was not a psychologist of religion, but still opened up wide perspectives that I later found very useful. It should be added that at this time I also studied general psychology and education at Åbo Akademi University.

From the beginning of the 1970s, Haralds Biezais was Professor of the History of Religion at the university. I became a postgraduate student supervised by him in 1971, after having written my Master's thesis on speaking in tongues, or glossolalia. At that point in time, not much research had been carried out in that area. But I brought out what there was to be found. As a postgraduate student one had to study the whole field of comparative religion. The course literature comprised large encyclopedias and thick books. The psychology of religion was included, too. It was mostly represented by the German-speaking Dorpat School, headed by Karl Girgensohn. Girgensohn's extensive work *Seelische Aufbau des religiösen Erlebens* (1921) was truly something very substantial to dig into. Here I now came into contact with other than depth psychological theory within the field of psychology of religion. The course literature, however, also offered deeper insight into the Swedish psychology of religion with Hjalmar Sundén as its prominent figure, and other researchers such as Tor Andrae. His monumental work *Mystikens Psykologi* (The Psychology of Mysticism) from 1926 became a goldmine for understanding the entire scholarly field of psychology of religion at the turn of the previous century.

The subject for my postgraduate work was the Pentecostal movement and glossolalia. Now I had the opportunity to penetrate really deeply into my religious background. I set out on my field studies, bought a cheap Volkswagen for a scholarship I had been awarded and drove all over the Swedish-speaking regions of Finland to conduct interviews and to record services and meetings. Over a period of approximately 5 years I attended around 300 services and interviewed about 80 persons of various ages. The material was deposited at the Åbo Akademi University, Church History Archives.

My first task was to analyze linguistically what glossolalia actually is. So far, research had had very limited opportunities to say anything on the actual sound combinations of glossolalia, mainly because no speaking in tongues had been available on tape. Now, however, tape recorders had become so small that they could be

taken into meeting rooms without attracting too much attention. And most of the Pentecostalists were so used to these “modernities” that it became feasible to record their meetings.

At this time, in the early 1970s, other studies also concerning glossolalia were published. I am mainly thinking of W. J. Samarin’s (1972) and Felicitas D. Goodman’s work (1972, 1973). Samarin was a linguist and asked, for example, colleagues at a conference to look at transcribed glossolalia. He regarded speaking in tongues as a fairly normal behavior that anybody who knows a language can use on special occasions. Goodman, for her part, tended to see deeper neurological functions that appeared as the ecstatic state behind the glossolalia. She had material from, among others, Charismatic groups on the Yucatán peninsula in Mexico. It should be added, that at this time there was a substantial outbreak of a Charismatic revival in the world and also in the Nordic countries. Consequently, the interest in ecstatic phenomena flourished in a totally new way.

My research based on empirical material resulted first in a Licentiate thesis in comparative religion at Åbo Akademi University (Holm, 1974, 1975). In the thesis I analyzed the glossolalia I had taped. Transliterating the glossolalia I could hear on the tapes was very time-consuming work. When I had found a transcription system, I could compare the sound structure of the glossolalia with that of the Swedish language. All the speakers in tongues that I had taped spoke Swedish as their mother tongue. There were statistics available on the sounds in Swedish, therefore I could even make statistical comparisons with the frequency of sounds in the glossolalia. Despite the method having many shortcomings, it still clearly showed that the sound structure in the glossolalia was very similar to that in Swedish. The differences were that there were no consonant clusters (e.g., *str-*) in the glossolalia and that the most frequent vowels were “a” and “i”. In other words, a kind of leveling of linguistic features took place in the glossolalia. In addition, I observed alliteration and assonance, so the glossolalia therefore resembled poetry to a fair extent. Sometimes also non-Swedish sounds were used, such as voiced “s”. The glossolalia could thus sometimes resemble, for example, French or Swahili; but most similar features were displayed with something close to Italian, Spanish, or – why not – Latin. I also noted that the glossolalia spoken by different persons was similar. It could therefore be claimed that there is a “glossolalia dialect” among Pentecostalists in Swedish-speaking Finland.

Functionally, I discerned two types of speaking in tongues: (1) prophetic, where a speaker loudly and clearly utters glossolalia, which is followed by a translation (“interpretation”) by the same person or somebody else into Swedish; and (2) prayer glossolalia, where everybody during an often collective prayer utters glossolalia half-whispering or aloud, which creates a kind of murmur of prayer. It is, obviously, considerably easier to transliterate and analyze prophetic glossolalia, because it is clearer on the tapes.

The conclusion of my linguistic studies of glossolalia was that it must be postulated that in certain situations each person who knows a language can also produce a mumbo-jumbo language similar to glossolalia. Because of social reasons, we mostly refrain from using our linguistic apparatus for other than normal language.

In certain situations, however, as in play with children or in jazz music, we might use nonsense language and thus communicate certain views and emotions to each other.

My research had got me to the point where I had been able to thoroughly study the sounds in the “heavenly language” which the Pentecostalists used in prayer and prophecy. It proved to be a nonsense language that is relatively easy to start speaking, if restraining factors of a social and psychological kind have been removed. The divine component was, so to say, erased to a very large extent. Nevertheless, the fact remains that glossolalia is used in religious contexts, and it gives the persons involved positive spiritual experiences for a long time. I return to this issue below, when describing my studies in Uppsala.

The glossolalia research taught me a great deal in the field of linguistics, not least what could be called a structuralist understanding of language, where one comes close to cognitive structures based on neurological foundations. Our language production, also of glossolalia, thus follows given rules that cannot be overlooked. My understanding of the psychology of religion had now been increased with something new in addition to depth psychology and “experimental psychology” à la the Dorpat School.

However, my postgraduate studies in the history of religion at Åbo Akademi University came to an end in a peculiar way. Professor Biezais formed a grudge against me and totally condemned my Licentiate thesis. He awarded it the lowest possible grade. Others at the Faculty of Humanities nevertheless reacted differently, not least those among the linguists, who praised my work. My thesis was also published in a series in Lund, Sweden, in 1974. But the professor’s resentment against me meant that it was impossible for me to continue studying the subject at Åbo. In that situation, the support from my wife was decisive. She fully understood my difficult situation. I then immediately moved to Sweden and the fairly newly established subject of psychology of religion at Uppsala University, the professorial chair of which was held by Hjalmar Sundén. There I was well received and could start my postgraduate studies in a circle of enthusiastic and determined doctoral students, among whom Owe Wikström, Thorleif Pettersson, Thorvald Källstad, Gustaf Ståhlberg, and Johan Unger can be mentioned in particular.

## **My Studies in the Psychology of Religion in Uppsala**

As a Licentiate of Philosophy and Master of Theology from Åbo Akademi University I had no problems in being accepted as a doctoral student in the psychology of religion at Uppsala University. Hjalmar Sundén welcomed me with open arms, and for several years he came to mean very much to me and my research. He supported me in a concrete way, although Professor Biezais in Åbo by letter attempted to disrupt the relationship between Sundén and me by pointing out my weaknesses as a scholar. However, Sundén realized that irrelevant psychological factors were the reason for the professor in Åbo attacking me.

For the third time, I now started reading postgraduate literature comprising about 8,000–10,000 pages. First, I had studied such a course in church history, but never completed my thesis in that subject, and then embarked on the history of religion, which meant a year of reading in Åbo. And now the third round of reading took place under the supervision of Professor Sundén. I got to study the whole contemporary field of the psychology of religion in depth. Naturally, we read everything that Sundén himself had written. Besides his extensive work *Religionen och Rollerna*, I read works on children and youth, and on aging. In addition he had published a number of essays dealing with various subjects from Zen Buddhism to the authorship of August Strindberg (Sundén, 1956, 1961, 1967, 1983). I also thoroughly studied the psychology of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustaf Jung, as well as the great American psychologists from the turn of the previous century: William James, E. D. Starbuck, G. Stanley Hall, and James H. Leuba. Somewhat later scholars on the psychology of religion that were read at that time included J. B. Pratt, Gordon W. Allport, Walter H. Clark, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, and Erik H. Erikson. Several Europeans were included, in addition to Girgensohn, for example, Werner Gruehn, and the Danish scholar William Grønbaeck was also strongly recommended by Sundén.

Sundén was active in the International Association for the Psychology of Religion (*Internationale Gesellschaft für Religionspsychologie*) that was revived in 1961. Later, I came to be both vice chair and chair of this association for several years. Within the association, we made the acquaintance of such researchers as Wilhelm Keilbach, W. Pöll, André Godin, and Antoine Vergote. In other words we received a very broad introduction to the entire field of the psychology of religion.

Much of the research at that time was, however, of a phenomenological and descriptive nature. Not much of the theory within general psychology had been integrated into the study of the psychology of religion. My research colleagues at Uppsala and I therefore felt the need for specific theories within the psychology of religion. In Hjalmar Sundén’s so-called role theory we found an onset for such a theory, which we could use in our own research and develop further in our own ways.

Sundén had received his doctorate in 1940 at the Uppsala University Faculty of Theology with a dissertation on the French philosopher Henri Bergson (Sundén, 1940). In the course of this work he had studied a large part of nineteenth-century European philosophy and literature. At social gatherings, Sundén loved telling us about the great French tradition into which he had been integrated. However, his doctorate did not render him any academic posts at first. Instead, he taught in upper secondary schools and at the Stockholm Police Academy. But the Bergsonian ideas did not leave him; during all of the 1950s he continued studying philosophy and psychology, which he also taught at the schools. At that time, Gestalt psychology and social psychology were the dominant trends within general psychology. Sundén here saw his chance to understand religious experiences, and he wrote his *magnum opus*, *Religionen och Rollerna* (The Religion and Roles: Sundén, 1959/1966). It has been published in several editions and also translated into German (Sundén, 1966). It is important to emphasize that in his book, Sundén did not focus only on role

theory. He also discusses several other theories, not least psychoanalysis and analytical psychology.

Sundén is best known for his so-called role theory. It is a combination of social psychology and perception psychology. In certain opposition to earlier theoretical views where religious experience was regarded as a category *sui generis*, Sundén claimed that the social influences on an individual in cases of religious experience must be studied. In other words, what the person has read, experienced, and adapted to must be explored. In religious contexts, the most central reading material is devotional literature, hymns, and songs, but above all, the Bible. Through contact with such a literature, in many cases for several years, a person builds up an internal readiness for experiences of a religious kind. In situations with emotional motivating factors, such as fear, anxiety, joy, and so on, an unconscious seeking for a pattern can take place in a person's nervous system, so that the stimuli reaching the person through restructuring turns into the interpretative pattern providing the spiritual experience. By taking on a role in the spiritual and human tradition, a person at the same time adopts the role of the opposite character, that is, the role of God, which in Biblical stories and many other similar narratives is interpreted as the active party. Through perception processes a person takes the role of the human party and experiences the events as an activity in the divine party. According to this theory, a religious life thus becomes an interaction with the profane world around us, interpreted through religious roles and structures. In this, God can be experienced as an active and coacting party.

Sundén developed the theory mainly by using certain examples from history and pointing to the existence of the conveying of religious tradition before the actual experience had appeared in the individual. In his doctoral thesis *On Religious Experience* (1976), Johan Unger developed Sundén's role theory more systematically. Owe Wikström, for his part, wrote a doctoral thesis called *Guds Ledning* (1975) (The Guidance of God), where he analyzed the experiences of elderly people of the guidance of God, and found that besides specific godly roles, we should also talk about a generalized godly role. Thorvald Källstad used the role theory to interpret the experiences of John Wesley (Källstad, 1974) and Thorleif Pettersson used it as a tool to understand the retention of religious experiences (Pettersson, 1975). Personally, I wanted to apply the theory for understanding the use of glossolalia among Pentecostals. In order to do this, I needed primary field material and therefore I conducted interviews with both older and younger Pentecostals, which I have already referred to above.

## **A Closer Look at My Research on Glossolalia and Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

The research climate during my time of study at Uppsala demanded the methods used to be as measurable as possible. Everything was to be structured and processed as far as possible before the actual collecting of material. Consequently I, too, compiled a questionnaire where the questions on the speaking in tongues were to be

as theoretically connected as possible. This was thought to guarantee the scientific standard of the work. When I began my fieldwork and made my first interviews, I soon realized that my questionnaire was totally unusable. My questions so to say disrupted the experiences of the informant and shattered them, so that no coherent whole appeared in the narrative. I then learned something very essential: the informants must be allowed to tell their entire story with the interpretations and comments that were important for themselves. Afterwards I could ask additional questions to verify certain details that were crucial for my understanding of the phenomenon.

What was apparent, and which I naturally already was aware of, was that glossolalia among the Pentecostalists was connected with a great spiritual experience called baptism in the Holy Spirit. This event is often a strong, emotionally characterized experience of God in an overwhelming way communicating the Holy Spirit to the person, and glossolalia appearing as a sign thereof. When I studied the material I realized that the main model narrative for baptism with the Holy Spirit is found in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which includes a description of the first Whitsunday and the apostles starting speaking in other tongues. In other words, this was a central role model for the Pentecostalists. Nevertheless, it must also be considered that most Pentecostalists have seen and heard other persons in their congregation speaking in tongues. These experiences, too, add to the creating of roles. My dissertation was completed in Spring, 1976 (Holm, 1976).

Thus, I could note that there were clear role models for Pentecostalists in a congregational community. The experience of baptism with the Holy Spirit is valued very highly within the Pentecostal movement and forms the fundamental experience for full inclusion in a Pentecostal community. The most important sign of spiritual baptism is glossolalia. Therefore there are strong motivating factors for this among the members. A stimulating factor is, in other words, a wish for baptism with the Holy Spirit, to be touched by God, and a restraining factor is that one must not start speaking in tongues on one's own accord, but it must be experienced as a gift from God. How does this actually happen?

The restraining factors are often overcome in a praying situation, where someone with spiritual authority lays his hands on the person's head and prays that God shall fill the person with the Holy Spirit. Often while listening to others who are speaking in tongues, glossolalia appears in the one who is also seeking to do so. Another situation when glossolalia appears is on going to bed at night. This is probably explained by a relaxation factor. When glossolalia breaks out in an individual, it is followed by strong emotional experiences of a positive nature. He or she takes on the role as “the one who has been baptised with the Holy Spirit;” that is, God has seen the person and given his Spirit in overwhelming amounts as strength and power for continued life. At the same time, the person takes on the godly role and experiences the glossolalia as a gift from God. This is something that is experienced in a “supernatural” way. It is a kind of ecstatic state, which can be very mild, but also more profound. After having received the gift of glossolalia, it is usually not difficult to start speaking in tongues again in other situations when entering prayer. Some, particularly somewhat older persons, could find it difficult to reach the relaxed state that is needed in order for glossolalia to break out. This could lead to years of waiting



without achieving the experience, which was far from positive for them. For teenagers, on the other hand, glossolalia could come over their lips so easily that the emotional experience was not particularly dramatic, and therefore did not leave any greater traces in their spiritual life.

My analysis of glossolalia and baptism with the Holy Spirit showed that there are strong role models in the Bible and in the congregational community. The motivating factors comprise the experience of baptism with the Holy Spirit being highly valued within the movement and that each Pentecostalist basically should seek and obtain the gift of spiritual baptism and glossolalia. When this happens, the individuals take on a given role behavior and, at the same time, adopt in their consciousness the godly role that structures the events taking place, so that the glossolalia coming over their lips is regarded as given by God. Thus a nonsense language based on one's native tongue (with occasional exotic additions) becomes the triggering factor for a role play where God is one of the parties. The persons enter a world of experiences which is clearly structured according to biblical and religious models. They remain in this spiritual world by associating with others who have similar experiences and by speaking in tongues, particularly in situations of prayer. They experience having obtained an "angelic language" and a "heavenly" language of prayer.

If we understand glossolalia and baptism with the Holy Spirit in this way, then we realize that the religious world of experiences is created by the construction of a spiritual symbolic reality. What can be seen as "simple" mumbo-jumbo, gains a totally different dimension through the connection to a certain role, and this creates a reality that is unique in itself. In the same way as the bread and wine in the Holy Communion and the water at christenings turn into something entirely different, glossolalia obtains a different and elevated role in the spiritual community. It achieves a symbolic function reaching far beyond the actual production of sounds.

Role theory in Sundén's version thus provided the opportunity to understand what glossolalia and baptism with the Holy Spirit as an experience entail from a more scientific perspective. It could be said that the persons enter a kind of "language game" where there are set rules, and if these are followed, a spiritual world opens up. For an essentialist (sometimes perhaps fundamentalist) approach, this perspective is relative and can be regarded as missing the claim for absolute truth. On the other hand, it allows for a broad understanding of what religion is and how it functions in single individuals. Sundén himself saw strong positive consequences of an interpretation at a psychological role level. It could be said that the role theory led to a social-constructivist approach with psychological consequences (Belzen, 1996). Naturally, the approach of role theory is not exhaustive in any sense. Many factors from depth psychology or developmental psychology can also be added.

My doctoral thesis was published in the spring of 1976. Since then I have, in various contexts, returned to the question as to what glossolalia is and how it should be understood. I had now, against the backdrop of my upbringing, penetrated into one of the "holiest" and most personal of all the spiritual experiences among the Pentecostalists. Obviously, understanding of scientific analysis has not always been great within the Pentecostal movement studied. For me personally, however, my research has resulted in a positive understanding of situations of spiritual experiences,

although I readily admit that it has also undergone hypercriticism of everything to do with religion and religiosity. Sundén’s personal attitude to religious issues has also helped me obtain a nuanced view, so that there is no need in me to, so to speak, “expose” glossolalia as deceit, which is what Professor Biezais at Åbo Akademi University asked me to set as the objective for my research. It is perhaps exactly on this point that he saw me as having an opposing view, and therefore formed a grudge against me. Nevertheless, after a “persecution period” of some 5 years on his part, I became his successor. And in hindsight I can say that I am grateful for his rough reactions, which made me actually move my studies to Uppsala, where a stimulating research environment supported me. Without that environment, I would never have come as far in my research as I have, after all.

After my doctoral dissertation I gradually got the opportunity to continue my research at the Research Institute of the Foundation of Åbo Akademi University. There I carried out three projects; a general one on the Pentecostal movement in Swedish-speaking Finland (Holm, 1978), one on the religious attitudes of schoolchildren (Holm, 1979a), and, above all, an extensive project on mysticism and intensive experiences (Holm, 1979b, 1982), where I could focus in depth on research on ecstasy and mysticism. The last-mentioned project was based on empirical studies including interviews and tests of about 100 persons in Swedish Finland. I was assisted by students of psychology who carried out the field studies. The test tools I used were translations of tests by Ralph W. Hood which he had used in an American environment. I had to study the entire research thoroughly on mysticism of the time, which also proved very useful later. This I could do thanks to the Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, an institute affiliated with Åbo Akademi University and specialized in mysticism. One of the results of my mysticism research was that we should realize that large groups in our societies have intensive experiences, which come close to what great mystics over time have reported. We can therefore talk about a kind of general mysticism in our everyday contexts.

## Conveying Tradition

In his book *Barn och Religion* (Children and Religion) in 1974, Sundén had already discussed something that he called “the upbringing system” (Sundén, 1974). By this he meant forced spiritual circumstances in homes where the parents saw themselves as being strong believers and more or less wanted to force the same attitude onto their children. This could entail threats and punishments, and depictions of hell being used as a method of deterrence. Sundén described such a home environment as dysfunctional in many respects. It damaged the children and did not allow them to grow into a personal positive relationship with God. In the minds of the children there was always a parent, sometimes also grandparents or another person, who, so to speak, stood in the way of a positive divine relationship. In such cases the children were locked into a negative attitude. They were called by the name of “God’s grandchildren.” This was the result of too secure a conveying of tradition. The children

reacted in three different ways: (1) reverse belief, or a kind of “atheism” which is not processed; (2) agonized religiosity where one is happy neither within nor outside the spiritual community; and (3) a clinging to the religious attitude, “overdoing,” and hyperreligiosity, which only lasts for a shorter period. The relationship of these “God’s grandchildren” has been analyzed by Nils G. Holmberth in his doctoral dissertation *Innanför eller utanför* (Inside or Outside), published in 1980 in Uppsala (Holmberth, 1980). Also Siv Illman (1984) in Åbo has described this attitude on the basis of empirical material. She found that sexuality, particularly the parents’ fear that their children would masturbate, and talk of the imminent return of Jesus, were the basis of traumatizing experiences.

Based on literature and observation, Sundén could classify the tradition bearers (the parents) as secure, insecure, or too secure. The secure ones convey their religion in a more comprehensive way, where words and actions without forceful methods go hand in hand. He called this a comprehensive conveying of tradition. The insecure parents, however, themselves suffer from problems pertaining to their religiosity, and therefore display negative and dismissive attitudes when church and religion are being discussed. Thus their children do not get a comprehensive idea of what religion is. Those who are too secure, for their part, convey religion in a forceful manner, as described above.

When observing my own childhood environment from the viewpoint of Sundén’s classification of the tradition bearers, I could note that much of the conveying of tradition in the more “closed” Christian contexts could be characterized as being too secure, which resulted in the children turning away from the spiritual environment of their parents. The aim that children should experience a conversion, be baptized, and then become members of the congregation, was impossible to force into happening, particularly because children had no experience of being outside the spiritual context. In order to be able to experience a conversion one had to be out in “the world” in sin, as it was put. In many cases the way back to the congregational community became too difficult.

I tried to explore (together with, among others, Kaj Björkqvist and Pertti V. J. Yli-Luoma [1996]) in a project called BAFRE (*Barn-förälder-religion* [Child-Parent-Religion]), the many research topics that this entire complex presents. The research results have been published in a number of smaller publications (Holm, 1990; Holm & Björkqvist, 1996). In this context we did, however, discover the attachment theory developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. They talk of secure, ambivalent, and avoidant attitudes in the relationship between children and adults, primarily parents. It is striking how many similarities there are between Sundén’s more “intuitive” categorization of the tradition conveyers and that of attachment theory. In recent years, attachment theory has been strongly developed and largely applied within educational and psychological contexts. Here, I can refer to the studies of Pehr Granqvist and colleagues in the area (Granqvist, 2002; Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008). They have been able to show that religion can become a compensation for close relationships, or it can correspond to close relationships. The signifying system of symbols in religion is developed in close relationships. The emotional sides of the process are at least as important as the cognitive ones. Extensive research opportunities still open up in this area within the psychology of religion.

I have combined the conveying of tradition with depth psychology in my analysis of the eccentric Åland artist Joel Pettersson (1892–1937; Holm, 1987). In autobiographical notes (mostly unpublished) and in a number of essays and plays he described himself and the environment in which he grew up and worked, an Oedipal piety appears in him in a very obvious way. In his teens, he could adopt religiosity mainly as an escape from demanding male roles. At the age of 25 he condemned God, the clergy, and the church, but later in life he turned to a Madonna-like piety. He fell mentally ill and died at a relatively early age.

## Integrated Role Theory

I have called the role theory developed by Hjalmar Sundén a perceptual one, in order to separate it from the earlier structural-analytical model, where various elements or parts were sought in a group, and also from the interactional, where the interaction between various characters and roles is emphasized. As we have seen, Sundén underlines the mystical roles, which can gain a perceptual function in the psyche in certain situations demanding an alternative form of experiencing. They thus have a structuring role in the field of perception.

Sundén’s role of theoretical argumentation seems to be best suited for explaining large and comprehensive experiences that are clearly based on holy texts of a given kind. However, it is less interesting as the level of biblical knowledge decreases strongly among people today, and as the religious experiences are calmer, less spectacular, but still important for the experiencing individual. Even if holy scriptures are not read as frequently, modern people still have some kind of image of God, an idea of the evil in the world, a feeling that rituals and ceremonies provide humans with important dimensions that cannot be reached otherwise. There might be tentative efforts to find a pattern for interpreting life, the world, perhaps the entire cosmos in the cultural context that encompasses one. Often there is an idea of a spiritual dimension to life, and one seeks ways of formulating this. This might be found in forms presented by fiction writers or various kinds of artists.

If we also take into account the childhood situation described through the conveying of tradition above, we realize that a large amount of impressions are saved in the human memory functions. These are combined with a creative imagination, which triggers contractions, dislocations, reductions, oblivion, and much more. We can therefore be claimed to have an inner existence space, with a set of memory materials relating to experiences of safety and rest, of love and forgiveness, of evil and vulnerability, of judgment and condemnation, and much more. These can be called symbols; they often take the form of images with strong emotional expressions. In the outer existence space, that is, the surrounding environment in which we live, there are myths, legends, fairytales, narratives, novel plots, poetry, songs, hymns, and so on, which all contain symbolic material. This material connects to inner structures of experience, described above, which results in an association making mythical and other cultural material meaningful for the individual and leading to understanding, maturity, and growth. A kind of inner role adaptation takes place.

I have called this way of analyzing experiences integrated role theory, and I have developed this approach to religion in a number of articles (Holm, 1997) and my book *Människans Symboliska Verklighetsbygge* (The Human Symbolic Construction of Reality; Holm, 2006). In my very basic textbook *Religionspsykologins Grunder* (The Basics of Psychology of Religion) I have also explained my understanding of religion as a “play” with symbols (Holm, 2002; German version 1988; see also Holm & Belzen, 1995).

## Concluding Remarks

When looking back at my research career, I see that my childhood environment has been processed in various ways. The precondition for my scholarly work has thus been the intensive and, in its way, demanding environment in which I grew up. The processing of my childhood has always rendered my research meaningfulness and joy, but sometimes pain, too. And still, it has been impossible to describe and analyze even close to everything in a childhood environment like mine. Many ideas within depth psychology I have also applied privately without the process resulting in articles or books. Nevertheless, my childhood and youth provided me with such a base that I have been able to undertake intellectual processing and research on the entire field of religion, far beyond Pentecostalism and Christianity. This has given me wide perspectives and interesting points of comparison between religions in Europe, the United States, Asia, and other parts of the world. I have seen that religion all over the world more or less functions in the same way on a psychological level.

Academic environments that have been particularly beneficial for me include, first, the Theological Faculty at Åbo Akademi University with an understanding and developing peer environment. Then, the department of the History of Religion at Åbo Akademi University, where wider perspectives of comparative religion opened up for me. And ironically enough, the harsh “banishing” of me by the professor in the early 1970s, turned into an incentive for moving to Uppsala, where the psychology of religion flourished at that time, with Hjalmar Sundén as its central figure. Without him and the excellent environment provided by the postgraduate seminar there, I would never have developed as a researcher and university teacher. Today, I am thoroughly grateful for the opportunities to process my childhood environment that I have had and for the influences I have received as student and scholar.

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# Chapter 7

## Psychology of Religion: A Personal Narrative

Ralph W. Hood Jr.



### Introduction

It is humbling to be asked to contribute to what amounts to a history of the psychology of religion in autobiography. Many of the names in this volume occur in my story, either as friends, colleagues, or scholars who have influenced and informed my own work. Autobiographies, as we know, both conceal and reveal. Historians will accept the task of unraveling what is lasting and true in any personal narrative. In my own case, I focus on an intellectual narrative, revealing only those personal factors that helped shape my views. I do not focus on specific dates, many of which are only recollections. Nor do I cite many personal references, allowing my *vita* to speak for itself. It is only in looking back that I realize I was fortunate to be part of a group of scholars who championed the resurgence of the psychology of religion in the 1960s. How I came to be part of this resurgence is the story I want to tell.

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R.W. Hood Jr. (✉)  
Professor of Psychology, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga,  
Chattanooga, TN, USA  
email: Ralph-Hood@utc.edu



## Childhood

I was born in Denver, Colorado in 1942, the son of a young teenage mother and a dashing WW II soldier who abandoned my mother before my birth. Three years earlier when my mother was in her mid-teens she had birthed my sister, Katherine. By the time I was two my mother had moved in with her mother, a private nurse who lived in southern California and worked as a live-in nurse for aged but wealthy families. My mother, without the benefit of even a high school graduation, struggled as a waitress and fry cook in various small coffee shops in Santa Monica. Until I was nearly in my teens the four of us lived in a small three-room apartment in Pacific Ocean Park, an area between Santa Monica and Venice in what was then best described as a beachfront slum area. However, living directly on the beach, with various commercial and tourist piers, in an area noted for its Bohemian diversity was wonderful. I was a “latchkey” child, free to roam the beach and piers without supervision. The lack of a male presence in my life was obvious to me from my earliest years. Teased for having no father, I insisted that I did and always noted that my name ended with “Jr.” With only a few fragmented childhood memories of my father who once with his second wife tried to gain legal custody of me (but not my sister). I intuitively knew firsthand the basis for the “father absent” theory of atheism.

What, as I note later proved to be ironic, is that I was raised in the Unity School of Christianity, a progressive and liberal nondenominational religion linked with what today is called positive psychology. For many years my mother taught Sunday school as we attended Unity by the Sea which for many years met in a rented movie theater in Santa Monica.

Three memories remain influential from my early religious schooling. First, Unity ordained women and the major figure in my church was Sue Sikking, another feminine influence in my life. I still have the Bible she gave me, signed when I was baptized with the simplicity and beauty of sprinkling rose petals on my head. The second major influence was the horror when my mother made an appointment for me at puberty for a male preacher to instruct me in sex. I went to the appointed meeting and listened to a range of acknowledgments of appropriate sexual behavior based upon assumptions as to what behaviors I must be engaging in, none of which were true. It was my first recognition of the necessity of rejecting authorities, especially when their assumptions were far from what I knew to be true. My last memory is a perpetual one. Unity by the Sea had finally built a fine church in Santa Monica. The sanctuary was paneled with wood and had various Bible verses. One was from Habakkuk 2:20. [But] “The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.” I would intensely try to be still and as silent as possible. I do not know what I expected to happen, but I knew something profoundly important was intended by this verse. It was the first clear beginning in my memory of my lifelong interest in mysticism and my sense that this was what religion is really all about.

Somewhere around my early teen years my mother remarried and we moved from the beach slums. We no longer attended church, and I have never been associated with any church since that time. However, I recite Habakkuk 2:20 daily.

One permanent effect of my early years on the beach was the appreciation of diversity. I have never been able to accept any belief system that excludes others based upon criteria such as gender, sexual orientation, or religion. It was not an intellectual conclusion, but simply part of a cultural diversity that surrounded me. As a solitary latchkey kid, with only some time with my sister, I roamed the beach and piers and what with fascination I saw as a kaleidoscope of humanity, all interesting in their own right. It was this that protected me from the abuses of public education.

## Adolescence

If puberty locates a turning point in individual development my experience with the pastor who “taught” me about sex was decisive. I knew to reject authority when it falsified what I knew by experience. School was an arena where I could test what others claimed to know and I quickly came to disdain public education.

I have few memories of my elementary and high school years that I can claim truly influenced me. I was in public education and early on learned it was fairly easy for me to grasp ideas. I discovered learning when I purchased my first book from a magazine and began my own little personal library in a household without books. I remember the first book I bought, *Design of the Universe*. My intellectual interests were best described as cosmological. The beach had given me the sense that any limit points to a transcendence. I had spent years on the beach wondering what was “over there” beyond the shoreline. My cosmological concerns led me to study physics, chemistry, and astronomy. I had my own home chemical lab in our garage and I learned to make hydrogen and explosives. Wanting to obtain gunpowder, I made my own using dried pigeon droppings (as a source of nitrate), mixed with carbon and sulfur.

I made small rockets to shoot into the heavens, most going a short distance and landing on neighbor’s rooftops. I tried for years to perfect a perpetual motion machine with obvious outcomes. Still, education fueled my cosmological interest and a desire to know but my education came from reading with a personal library that rapidly began to grow. Later in my career when I met Bernie Spilka I was delighted to learn of his love of books and of his massive private library, perhaps the only library of an American psychologist that exceeds my own. I was astounded when I learned early in my career that psychologists read journals more than books. Then an event happened to change my focus forever; my concern with cosmology turned to a concern with flying saucer cults.

The exact memory of how I became involved with flying saucer cults is unclear. However, I have vivid memories of being driven by two friends to meetings in Los Angeles of persons who had been “abducted” by aliens and others who had witnessed the most wondrous range of events associated with flying saucer cults. Some had traveled to distant planets, each with a wondrous story to tell. The question

I had was not simply what existed beyond the supposed limits of my world, but also what kind of people might inhabit other places. However, my interest never was (nor is it now) merely psychological. I wanted to know the answer to the more basic questions as well: were these stories true; did the events being narrated really happen? This has been a constant theme of all my work and has isolated me from much of mainstream psychology that claims to lack authority or means to address fundamental ontological issues.

I never doubted I would go to college even though I had no idea what college was other than I could learn more there and it was after one graduated from high school. No one in my family had even graduated from high school. The major outcome of my high school years was a thirst for answers to ontological questions, and a shift from basic science to psychology. However, the major practical outcomes were that I married my high school sweetheart, Betsy. We had been together since our mid-teens. Like me, she was from a difficult home with a more than abusive father and one sister, mentally challenged but who was cared for in the home with a cruelty that matched the way my own sister was treated by an abusive step-father. So I was certain that as soon as I could, I would leave home and help Betsy leave her home. I got a paper route and began saving money. I turned eighteen on July 12 and on July 31 of that year I married Betsy, 6 months my senior, and moved into a rented apartment fully furnished with money I had made from my paper route. Betsy had no interest in college; I was ready to enroll at the University of California at Los Angeles, only a few miles from my apartment but had no idea even how to find the location of the school. I had to get directions and enroll. However, first there was the issue of registering for the draft (required in those years) and the fact of the Vietnam War.

## **Vietnam and Registering for the Draft**

Before I could sign up for college I had to register for the draft, a legal requirement at the time. My shift to psychology had led me to question not simply Vietnam but war itself. I read widely on early Christian pacifism, the history of the Quakers and peace churches, and discovered the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. I was persuaded then, as I am now, of the absolute futility of war and of the superior truth in what is best termed *satyagraha*. I understood the term to mean not pacifism or nonresistance, but an active refusal to accept injustice and to act in a way that recognizes that the means used will be the ends achieved. It was Gandhi's commitment to "God is truth" and it fit perfectly with my passion for ontology. I would come to consider evil to be more in a disjunction between ends and means and less the content of the ends desired. My mystical leanings placed love of truth (God) as humankind's destiny and any means that was disjunctive with that end as evil. This would lead in a curious and circuitous way to my appreciation of Milton Rokeach's *The Open and Closed Mind* (1960), a topic of my Master's thesis. But I'm getting ahead of my story; I knew I must register for the draft. It was the law.

Having seldom been more than a few miles from my home, I had to seek out the location of the draft center. I ended up at what turned out to be a recruiting center for the Air Force and horrified at the form I received when I asked to register to join the military. Later, I would learn that my biological father was an Air Force recruiter not far away in Hollywood, California.

I had decided I would refuse to register for the draft for two reasons: first, my studies had convinced me (and I remain convinced) of the truth of *satyagraha*. Second, although one could register as a conscientious objector and seek noncombatant status, the only legal justification had to be for religious reasons. I refused to justify my beliefs within a religious frame and hence could not sign even the refusal to accept a combatant role.

At rare times, naïveté works. I wrote a letter explaining my refusal along with the unsigned draft form. Without a lawyer, an appeal, or any other effort I received in the mail a draft card that gave me conscientious objector status. I knew that combined with the fact I was married and soon to be in college being drafted was unlikely.

## Psychology as a Career Choice

I registered at UCLA with the same naïveté that characterized the way in which I responded to the requirement of registration for the draft. I signed up for classes, poorly advised. My naïveté was perhaps best illustrated by how I arranged my schedule. As an example, I signed up for chemistry listed at MWF 10:00–10:50. Delighted, I chose Wednesday and was horrified when I showed up for class and learned that I had missed Monday and Friday which were required as well. I had done the same for all other classes and had a disastrous first week.

Undergraduate college was a huge disappointment for me. I was enamored of learning and loved books. I was so enamored of books that for many years I would not mark in any book and covered all books to protect them. My personal library of books grew. I never sold back any texts and having a vague sense that I would be a psychology major, I took every course outside the discipline that I thought might interest me. Philosophy intrigued me no less than history. In these courses we read original texts. All the hard science intrigued me. However, laboratory work seemed dull and routine and the mastering of a technique to produce an already known outcome did not interest me. After working so long on a perpetual motion machine, physics was dull. Likewise, chemistry seemed less exciting than my own self-taught garage efforts to create a rocket using dried pigeon droppings. On the side I read texts in alchemy, guided by reading Jung, whose psychology intrigued me and I committed firmly to a psychology major. Much later in my career when I meet Jordon Peterson at a meeting of the Council of Spiritual Practices he noticed me with a copy of Jung's (1954/1958) *Answer to Job*. From that chance encounter came an appreciation for Jordon Peterson's (1999) *Maps of Meaning*, a work of genius unnoticed in the psychology of religion literature. I have tried to make researchers

aware of this goldmine of creativity as an exemplar of what a theoretical psychology of religion should look like.

However, it was psychology at my great universities that brought me only disappointment. Psychology courses were my least favorite. In hindsight, I was fortunate to have to work full-time and go to school full-time; it meant I spent little time on campus, only came to take courses, and could distance myself from what I was being taught. Working with less educated, but honestly insightful people in a major supermarket where I unloaded trucks and trimmed vegetables, let me talk primarily to Japanese Americans (who dominated produce work) whom I befriended. I learned from their own personal stories much more psychology than I thought I was learning at UCLA. The UCLA psychology department was dominated by behaviorists as were many American psychology departments in the 1960s. Much of the focus was upon varieties of learning theory, based upon laboratory studies with rats. Soon our apartment had cages with white rats, and a maze I built to see if rats could learn by observational condition to avoid shocks administered to other rats in a forced choice situation. I built the maze and wired the shock device from a transformer salvaged from an old television. However, soon behaviorism and the use of white rats became much too limiting. In addition to Jung, I had discovered Freud from an almost random disparaging comment by an abnormal psychology teaching assistant. I bought a five-volume set of Freud's clinical papers (Jones, 1959) and while studying a psychology that did not interest me, began to devour Freud who did. When I discovered *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud, 1939/1964) I read it with astonishment. This was a psychology worthy of the name.

I found no support or interest in Freud's views of religion among my psychology cohorts and no serious interest in Freudian theory other than to translate it into some trivial behavioral hypotheses. None of my instructors in psychology read Freud's more cultural and social works and none wanted to discuss Freud's more cultural works in class. Freud was not scientific and thus not psychology. While being taught this almost as a mantra, I read the more socially oriented writers who took Freud seriously. Most significant were Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955), and Norman Brown's *Life Against Death* (1959). I graduated from UCLA uncertain where to go or what to do. All I knew is I wanted another psychology, one that spoke to bigger issues and had the range of Freud's vision and the depth of Jung's mysticism.

## Master's Degree

I was fortunate that California had such an excellent public educational system with universities, state colleges, and community colleges accessible to all and no tuition. Uncertain of what to do, and without any sense of how doctorate education really worked, I enrolled at California State University at Los Angeles in their Master's-level psychology program. I could continue to work full-time and to settle on figuring out in my own mind where I might find a doctorate program that had a psychology other than I was exposed to at UCLA.

Again, I was fortunate to work full-time and seldom to be on campus. Thus, I only came for required course work, left class, and because the content of what was taught was so easy to grasp, I could read books of my choice. Fortunately I found social psychology and one book that led me to become a social psychologist. The book was the now classic *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). In a social psychology seminar it had been briefly mentioned, its methodological flaws exposed, and the Freudian basis of much of the theorizing less challenged than ridiculed. This was my clue to read the original work. I bought the two volumes and carefully studied every word. Here was a vision of a grand social psychology, linking depth theory and measurement, directed toward understanding an historical phenomenon that continues to plague me (the Holocaust), and which was spanning a massive empirical literature that one could hardly keep up with. This literature continued to occupy my interest. Other courses in my Master's program are hardly remembered. However, I knew I would seek out a doctorate program that would challenge the current status of psychology and was moving toward dealing with phenomena in "real life" and the authoritarian personality tradition was my model.

In discussing (when I could) the authoritarianism research with my professors and cohorts I came to recognize what I perceived as a powerful bias: psychologists, seemingly liberal by nature if not calling, had identified *right-wing* authoritarianism as a problem but denied the possibility of *left-wing* authoritarianism. Nazi Germany and the Holocaust were lumped with Fascist Italy as one phenomenon. The *California F scale* became widely known as a measure of "fascism" despite its never being intended as such. My reading of everything I could on the Holocaust led me to explore the history of other atrocities including my own country's treatment of its indigenous peoples. I came to view most modern states as postgenocidal and the constant pointing to Nazism as a curious mode of scapegoating. I also discovered Marx on my own. His vision of a realized species being had led me to read the history and writings of the supposedly "Marxist" states. I studied the history of Mao's Cultural Revolution, and of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. I read Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* (1932) and tried to reconcile subsequent writings of Lenin and Stalin with Marx's earlier writings, especially the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx, 1959). I remember the allusion to Marx in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud, 1930/1964) and was intrigued with the literature contrasting Marxian and Freudian views on human nature. Long convinced of the inadequacy of Freud's basic pessimism, I soon realized the horrors of what I believed to be left-wing authoritarianism. Although none of my professors entertained this possibility, I returned to Rokeach's *The Open and Closed Mind* (1960). Here was what I was looking for: a model in which *what* was believed was less relevant than *how* one believed. The psychological focus on the process of belief allowed for both left- and right-wing authoritarianism. Rokeach's umbrella term, dogmatism, was offered as an alternative to authoritarianism. It also was congruent with my continued interest in *satyagraha* and nonviolence.

In simple terms I thought Rokeach correct in his criticism of psychologists committed to the authoritarian personality tradition. The massive empirical data

finding the less educated, those with lower IQs, and political conservatives, especially of the lower social class to be the carriers of prejudice and discrimination seemed lopsided to me. Equally deficient was the claim that the highly educated, those with higher IQs, and political liberals who often are socially mobile are the champions of open-mindedness. The empirical literature based on Rokeach's dogmatism theory was as a grand theoretical and empirical extension of the authoritarian personality tradition and socially relevant to real historical events that challenged both European and Asian cultures. The closing of one's mind was a characteristic independent of social class, intelligence, education, or political orientation. This was a social psychology that could occupy my interest.

Seeking to explore something about this in my Master's thesis proved a challenge. None of my professors would allow such a broad speculation as the relationship between personality and culture. However, I found a solution. I would focus upon measurement issues (long a concern of American social psychology) and see if Rokeach's operationalization of dogmatism worked. I focused upon his little-noted Opinionation Scale in which opinionated language linked to content was used as an indicator of closed-mindedness. Presumably the opinionated clause in each sentence indicated the process of belief. I created a separate scale, dropping the opinionated phrasing in each item leaving only the factual content. I compared this to the original scale item by item. No differences existed between the two versions of the scale, and hence I concluded that Rokeach had failed to measure a distinct mental process indicated by opinionated language. However, I remained committed to much of the basics of Rokeach's theory and continue to reference his work in theoretical and empirical articles. My Master's thesis became my first publication (Hood, 1968) and I realized the ease with which American social psychology was enamored of empirical data (measurement) more than theory. However, it also confirmed that I needed a doctorate program where theory drove the collection of meaningful empirical data.

## **Paul F. Secord and the University of Nevada at Reno**

By sheer luck I attended the University of Nevada for my doctorate. I sought a program in social psychology that was broadly based and critical of both laboratory and measurement approaches to social psychology. I heard about Paul F. Secord, who had the most widely adopted social psychology textbook in use at that time (Secord & Backman, 1964). What was significant is that he had teamed with a sociologist, Carl W. Backman, to create an interdisciplinary text that bridged the two disciplines. They also had created a newly established social psychology program at Nevada that was both sociological and psychological. Even better, I received generous fellowships, so for the first time I could attend school full-time and not work outside the university.

My doctorate experience was perfect. In my first meeting with Paul Secord, I expressed my concerns with psychology and the desire to work more independently.

Together we crafted a program where most required courses were replaced with independent study and selected seminars. Dr. Secord was in transition in his own career, critically assessing his empirical work in person perception and his minimal efforts at theory construction. In seminars we read philosophical critiques of psychology. Among those I remember as influential were Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949) and especially Peter Winch's *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy* (1958). I have never seen the wisdom in separating psychology from philosophy nor do I think it even possible. I discovered and relished Wittgenstein, both of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) and the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). I found the former to be essentially mystical and the latter a critique of most academic psychology that I had been taught to date. I also quickly learned that my experience reading Wittgenstein paralleled that of reading Jung; the original works far exceeded any works by authors claiming to work within their respective traditions.

Paul Secord was delightful in his openness and willingness to question his own work. I remember seminar papers I wrote on contemporary social psychology, including Paul's work in person perception with such titles as "The Trivialization of Research" and "The Triumph of Non-Theory." Paul welcomed criticism and was clearly in the process of re-evaluating the methods dominant in American psychology. I began to present convention papers, often in sessions chaired by Paul Secord on critiques of social psychology.

Obtaining a major grant, Secord brought in European scholars who, broadly speaking, were influenced by linguistic philosophy. Most notable was Rom Harré. I never took a seminar with him but read his work (and still do). However, I learned one major thing from Harré by observing his work style. He spent little time on campus, but always came from writing at home and with books and pages under his arms, rushing into the office and leaving a pile with specific instructions for the secretaries. In the days before computers, I noticed that Harré would write another article or book by "cutting and pasting" materials from past writing, linked with paragraphs and sentences reworking this material into a new synthetic form. This was, I thought, a key to his prolific output and an admirable effort at narrating an ultimately single, coherent theoretical approach.

While I had been a student for only 2 years at Nevada I noticed Rom Harré teaming up with Paul Secord as a means of integrating his philosophical concerns with a major figure in American social psychology. In 1971 the first issue of their newly created journal, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, appeared, edited by Harré & Secord (1972). This was followed in 1972 by their influential *The Explanation of Social Behaviour*. By the mid-1970s I was appointed as a consulting editor to the journal founded by Harré and Secord and have continued to serve today. However, neither Harré's gradually increasing influence in the Nevada Psychology Department nor Secord's proved to alter mainstream social psychology in America. If anything it became more entrenched in laboratory experimental measurement-based studies that continue to dominate American social psychology today.

The Psychology Department at Nevada provided alternatives to the newly emerging social psychology championed by Paul. Willard Day was a brilliant radical



behaviorist with no interest in Harré's explosive influence on psychology at Nevada. I spent long hours arguing with him about radical behaviorism. I found Skinner's *About Behaviorism* (1974) profound (and profoundly wrong) and *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971) a work of pop psychology that deserved the critique given it by one of America's most intellectually limited vice presidents, Spiro Agnew.

However, most influential was a sociologist for whom I have little good to say so he shall remain nameless. He was a brilliant Marxist and I took a seminar with him on revolutionary theory. He was adamant to distinguish right from left political movements and processes, bemoaning lumping both Nazism and Fascism together and illuminating them by authoritarian theory, but careful separating China's cultural revolution and the Bolshevik revolution and the Soviet state as nonauthoritarian creative transformations preparing and promoting the realization of humankind's being. I spent many wonderful hours debating the issues, and urging him to consider Rokeach's theory, which he rejected out of hand.

Inasmuch as I had little to gain from actual class work, I was on a "fast track" to receive my doctorate in a record 2-year stint at Nevada. I chose to work initially with my Marxist mentor on a psychohistorical study of the radicalization of Stalin. Reading Stalin horrified me. When I had to confront the historical fact of the mass murders under the Stalin regime I hit an impasse. It was clear my dissertation would have to be a psychohistorical apologetic for Stalinism. I realized I could not do this and put the demand in the same category of Holocaust denial. This ended my further contact with my Marxist mentor, who soon left Nevada not having achieved tenure.

Given my Master's thesis experience, I told Paul that I wanted to do a purely conceptual thesis. I chose to do a dissertation titled, "A Conceptual Analysis of Creativity." I could do this for two reasons. Gerald Ginsberg, a mainstream psychologist had a major grant to work on creativity. I was his research assistant and provided many measurement and empirical procedures to explore the widely used measure of creativity, the Remote Associates Test (RAT). I began a series of studies and with Ginsberg as my junior author began publishing on determinates of RAT performance, ranging from purely methodological issues to the differential cultural availability of response items. These studies (Hood, 1969; Hood & Ginsberg, 1969, 1970a, 1970b) utilized my empirical skills as defined by classic American measurement-based experimental psychology. However, the work was too boring to sustain my interest. I wanted to use the newly emerging philosophical critiques to be the first dissertation out of Nevada to reflect the new social psychology. I thus turned to a linguistic analysis of creativity for my doctoral thesis. My analysis emphasized that creativity is an intentional original act of a person that contributes to the dignity of humankind. The most significant act of creation is one's own self and that is beyond simple causal correlates. Second chaired my committee, and Ginsberg was a member. Earlin Skorpen, a brilliant philosopher had to assure the psychologists that my analysis was sound. He had me read Kant and we spent many hours debating philosophical aspects of psychology. That Skorpen was a Quaker and opposed the Vietnam War was a factor not unnoticed by me. My dissertation liberated me from the psychologies I had been taught before Nevada and allowed me to embed

the empirical approach to creativity as measured by the RAT within a larger conceptual framework.

## Studying Suicide

I stayed on at Nevada for a postdoc dealing with clinical psychology. Because of issues in my own family, I had a keen interest in suicide framed within my new knowledge of linguistic philosophy. I could not understand academic clinical psychology and found it (and most clinicians I met) absurd. Perhaps “absurd” is the right word, for I had read Camus’s *Myth of Sisyphus* (1955) along with *A Sociology of the Absurd* (1970) co-authored by Stanford Lyman, a sociologist at the University of Nevada who was unimpressed with Harré. Most influential were the many books (even then) of Thomas Szasz, especially his *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961). A professor at Nevada had a grant to study suicide and I stayed on to help. My interest was in how psychiatrists constructed suicide and assessed suicidal intent. It was a productive year leading me to publish research on the psychiatric treatment of suicidal patients and to document psychiatrists’ inability to detect genuine from feigned suicide notes.

During my postdoc year I realized I had to choose a career path. Betsy and I had our first daughter, Linda Michelle in Reno and I had additional obligations. Paul was insistent that I apply to a top-tier research institute and carry on the new social psychology emerging out of Nevada. My empirical work could assure that my conceptual criticism was not based on ignorance of mainstream methodologies in psychology. I had experienced what I deemed the darker side of academia, and knew what would be demanded if I entered a top-tier research university. I told Paul that I had decided to find a university in a rural area and teach according to my own style and without pressure to mentor doctorate students seeking powerful academic careers. Despite his pleas and solicitation of several excellent offers for me, I applied to an ad for an assistant professor slot at South Dakota State University. It was in a small town (Brookings) of only a few thousand residents, dominated by a state university and it sounded good. With only a phone interview, I bought a house sight unseen, and began my own style academic career much to Secord’s chagrin.

## South Dakota and a Clear Decision on a Career Path

South Dakota was a fitting place for me. With fierce winters and limited opportunities for employment, the state continually loses population, even today. At the undergraduate university there I taught mainly first-generation college students. None of my teaching focused upon mainstream psychology. I was admonished by my department head, a retired Air Force major, that I needed to teach psychology that was represented in standard texts. I knew I could not achieve tenure under these

terms and with a second daughter, Laura Nicole just born, I needed something that would be more secure and compatible with my disdain for much of mainstream psychology. I received a letter of reappointment but refused to sign, as I sought a university more congenial to my interests.

At South Dakota I had discovered William James. Reading the *Varieties of Religious Experience* (James, 1902/1985) was another turning point for me. Here was a focus upon human experience combined with rich “thick” descriptions. It refused to devalue such experiences by unmasking their physiological correlates or by accepting pathology as an explanation. Furthermore, it was not prematurely bogged down with theological debates. It was in a sense, a return to Unity by the Sea for me and a substitute for religion. I sensed I could use James to explore Habakkuk 2:20. I decided I would study religious experience with the empirical skills I had acquired with a keen sense of their limitation solidified by wisely reading almost everything William James wrote. What I needed was a location where this could be done. The American South seemed perfect.

## **The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga as My Permanent Home**

I answered an ad for a social psychologist at the newly formed branch of the University of Tennessee that only a year earlier had been a private segregated school, the University of Chattanooga. Eager to establish a credible reputation for this newly emerged state university campus; my publication record assured me an offer. My family and I moved to Chattanooga and I vowed to achieve tenure and make full professor while teaching and writing in a manner that allowed me to fulfill the creation of self I had argued for in my dissertation. However, my desire to focus on the study of religious experience based upon by readings of William James was a topic seldom noted in any psychology texts and for which I had no role models. A divorce assured my decision to stay at Chattanooga would not be altered. Although I would later receive several invitations from top-tier universities in both America and Canada, I never was tempted to leave UTC nor have I regretted that decision.

## **Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues (PIRI)**

As a graduate student I joined the American Psychological Association (APA) at the encouragement of Paul Secord. Its annual conventions seemed so massive and the number of divisions continually increased so I had no sense of which divisions to join. The division of social psychology bored me; it was filled with studies that seemed methodologically and statistically at best overkill, and for which I had conceptual alternatives. However, I discovered a group identified as Psychologists

Interested in Religious Issues (PIRI) and my emerging interest in religion led me to identify with this group and to attend its meetings and seek paper presentations under its auspices. I began to network with social psychologists who were engaged in the study of religion in what at this point was an interest group planning to seek APA divisional status. I quickly noted that clinical psychologists dominated the group and most of these were Catholics or Protestants from conservative religious schools. However, by being selective I began to interact with those with some research or theoretical interest who would eventually become the “who’s who” in the resurgence of American psychology of religion. Among them were Richard Gorsuch and Newton Malony from the graduate psychology program at Fuller. Others included Mary Jo Meadow, Bernie Spilka, Richard Kahoe, and Ed Shafranske. I had a group to network with and support my own interest in the psychology of religion. However, PIRI disturbed me some. It opened divisional meetings with prayer which seemed to me to be out of place in a scientific society. (Later I would have this same issue with projects and conventions sponsored by the Templeton Foundation.) Furthermore, PIRI had no journal and I sought places to publish my research in any area not welcome in mainstream psychology journals. My eye was on tenure and I had been hired not simply to teach but to do research. Without publication tenure was unlikely.

## **The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/The Religious Research Association**

As I began a systematic research program I realized that with a full undergraduate teaching load and no research assistants or funds I had to be creative. American psychology is notorious for using undergraduate students as “volunteer” subjects and I largely initiated this policy at UTC. Furthermore because the American South is dominated by more fundamentalist forms of religion I had a valued subject pool for initial forays into the study of religious experience. Needing publication outlets for my studies I discovered the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (JSSR)* and *Review of Religious Research*. I immediately subscribed to both journals and joined both organizations which I was delighted to learn meet jointly for their annual conventions. A bit later I realized sociology of religion was a legitimate subspecialty in sociology and although I did not join any sociological societies, I did subscribe to *Sociological Analysis* (now *Sociology of Religion*). I began to attend annual meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association in addition to the APA. I was happy less with what I heard than the fact that the topic was at least religion. In the 1960s these societies had a nice mixture of sociologists, psychologists, and some anthropologists and political scientists. I was delighted to learn that the psychology included psychoanalysis and have fond memories of attending sessions where persons such as James Dittes, Donald Capps, and Paul Pruyser presented. I was convinced that one could do empirical research guided by classical Freudian theory and was delighted to find

that Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi agreed. Sociologists such as Rodney Stark and Charles Glock put faces on what until then were only names on books. They also impressed me with their continual productivity, largely empirical but not devoid of theory. However, among those I found with amazing theoretical clarity and breadth were Roland Roberts and Richard Fenn.

While staying active in PIRI, I utilized membership and attendance at jointly held annual SSSR/RRR meetings to network with empirical researchers. Many PIRI psychologists were active in SSSR (more than RRA) and these were not the clinical psychologists who dominated PIRI, or if they were clinically oriented, they were also research oriented. Ken Pargament was exemplary. Others were linked to universities that were not identified with Christian groups. Most influential for me was Bernie Spilka, associated with the Jewish tradition, and his students, whom I collaborated with and were to go on to significant careers in the psychology of religion such as Lee Kirkpatrick. A few other researchers associated with secular universities, such as C. Daniel Batson challenged the conservative orientation of the PIRI psychologists who dominated SSSR. What united us all was what Richard Gorsuch in the first *Annual Review of Psychology* (1988) survey of religion identified as a measurement paradigm. Furthermore the measurement paradigm that dominated the early resurgence of the psychology of religion among us all was Allport's now classic focus upon intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Research using the Religious Orientation Scale (Allport & Ross, 1967) gave me the entry I needed into the empirical study of religion, a way to make others aware of my interest in religious experience.

Little occurred in the American psychology of religion that was empirical that did not reference Allport and the intrinsic/extrinsic orientation. Most of the research in the early period was correlational: relating I/E religion to prejudice and to methodological issues in measurement, theory, and social desirability; Dan Batson introduced quest as an extension of neglected aspects of Allport's original concerns; Gorsuch refined the measurement of I/E; and Kirkpatrick separated E into personal and social components. Others linked I/E to their own theoretical concerns: Ken Pargament to coping, Lee Kirkpatrick to attachment, and Bernie Spilka to attribution theory and prayer.

My own efforts linked I/E to religious experience. An early measure of mine was the Religious Experience Episodes Measure (REEM); using descriptions culled from James's *Varieties* in which persons were simply asked to rate on a Likert scale the extent to which they had had an experience like the one described (Hood, 1970). I linked this in various ways to the I literature demonstrating that at least the report of such experience was more likely associated with I than E religious orientation, and that interesting methodological issue could be raised and resolved by the fact that using Allport's fourfold typology (by median split of the I and E scales) revealed that the inability to distinguish I from IP and E from IA in reports of religious experience could be instructive for theory in the psychology of religion.

The dominance of correlational research in the resurgence of psychology of religion allowed me to support an occasional Master's student who was interested in psychology of religion. Foremost among these was Ronald Morris who stayed on at UTC with a joint position in the psychology department and the office of institu-

tional research. Starting in 1980 and for over 25 years he has been a frequent coauthor with me on projects, often providing statistical insights. He has been a constant friend and a critical sounding board for my own views in psychology of religion.

## **The Resurgence of a Psychology of Religion**

There is little doubt that the I/E literature allowed for the re-emergence of the psychology of religion as it provided an empirical psychology of religion congruent with mainstream American psychology. Most of the empirical literature by PIRI psychologists came from those associated with SSSR (and to a lesser extent RRA). I continued to be active in PIRI and was elected president in 1992. It was during my presidency that the outgoing executive committee passed a motion to change the name of the division to “Psychology and Religion” with my desire that there be an integration and dialogue between the two disciplines. However, immediately the incoming executive committee under President Ray Paloutzian (I remember well the meeting I had with Ray at an APA meeting in Washington, DC, where I advised him how to get involved with Division 36) voted to change the name to the traditional *Psychology of Religion*.

## **Bier and James Division 36 Awards**

Perhaps most revealing of my own views of psychology is indicated by my chairing of the awards committee of Division 36 for many years after my presidency. The two awards given by the division that are most relevant are the William James and William C. Bier Awards. How they are given is instructive of the field and my role in it. I was the youngest recipient of the William James Award in 1985 given for “outstanding and sustained contribution to the psychology of religion.” However, the irony is that William James himself would not have been granted the award. In fact it is given for measurement-based empirical psychology in the very restricted sense that James would oppose. This award was easy to select largely by looking at who produced the empirical research. Hence names such as Bernie Spilka received the award the year before me followed by Richard Gorsuch the year after me. Others who subsequently received the award included Ken Pargament, C. Daniel Batson, Bruce Hunsberger, and most recently, Lee Kirkpatrick. These are among the most frequently cited names in psychology of religion textbooks. However, as chair I argued for others whose research was less measurement-based and actually more Jamesian in nature. This resulted in James Fowler, Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, Antoine Vergote, and Jacob Belzen receiving this award. Some of these were not affiliated with Division 36. Successful efforts were also made to include other Europeans who followed a more American research model such as Helmut Reich and Kelvi Tamminen.

It is in the William C. Bier Award that my orientation in the psychology of religion is most reflected. Although a bit lower in prestige, the award is given for a more

integrative approach to psychology and religion in the sense of the original interest of the members of PIRI; the key emphasis is on “psychologists *interested* in religious issues.” These winners are likely to be more noted in the broader human science history of psychology of religion. Among those are William Meissner, David Bakan, Donald Capps, Edward Shafranske, Ana-Maria Rizzuto, and James Jones. The irony is that many American psychologists of religion are not interested in religion other than to explain it away reductively. These Bier recipients are notable exceptions and not incidentally several represent theoretical views almost anathema to mainstream American psychology, psychoanalysis, and object relations.

## **The Middle Years of the Resurgence of the Psychology of Religion**

The concern with measurement and correlational studies allowed psychology of religion some respect in mainstream psychology. However, the literature was largely scattered or alternatively, focused on interdisciplinary journals such as *JSSR* not read by mainstream psychologists not interested in religion. Sometime in the early 1980s I suggested to Bernie Spilka that I was thinking of doing a textbook on the empirical psychology of religion. He immediately noted that he and Richard Gorsuch were planning such a text and invited me to join their effort. I was delighted both because I thought a textbook would help create the field and because I thought the combination of investigators personally identified with diverse faith perspectives would diffuse any claim to apologetics. In 1985 we published *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. The relative success of the text was immediate and competed well with other empirical texts that emerged at roughly the same time: *Psychology of Religion: Religion in Individual Lives* (Meadow & Kahoe, 1985) and *The Religious Experience: A Social Psychological Perspective* (Batson & Ventis, 1982). I am convinced the success of our text was its eclectic survey of the empirical literature as opposed to the more narrowly focused empirical concern of the other texts. Ray Paloutzian published his *Invitation to the psychology of religion* (1983), a brief introduction to the field for undergraduates. David Wulff published *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views* (1991), a masterful survey of theories more than empirical data. I endorsed his first edition and used it in my own class over the concerns of the publisher (Prentice-Hall) of my own text. I also used it to assure Wulff the Bier award from Division 36.

The emergence of successful texts assured the success of psychology of religion once again in American psychology. The Meadow and Kahoe text did not go to a second edition. Batson’s (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993) and Wulff’s (1997) text went through second editions as did Paloutzian’s (1996). Paloutzian has a third edition currently in preparation. Only the original Spilka text has published more than two editions to date. A second edition by Hood, Spilka, and Gorsuch (1996) was followed by a third (2003) with Bruce Hunsberger added as a fourth author. The fourth edition by Hood, Hill, and Spilka was published in (2009) with Peter Hill

replacing Bruce Hunsberger who died while finishing his contribution to the third edition.

## Psychology of Religion: Journals

Having been active in SSSR and Division 36 of the APA it became evident that psychology needed a journal devoted to the psychology of religion. Psychology of religion was scattered across many journals and if there could be a specific journal devoted to psychology of religion, ideally associated with Division 36, we were confident the field would be firmly established as a specialty in psychology. In the early 1990s H. Newton Malony and Laurie Brown had begun to approach Lawrence Erlbaum to publish a journal in the psychology of religion, one hoped to be linked to Division 36. I was asked to come on board and to help persuade Erlbaum to sponsor the journal. We were vaguely aware of the *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, the oldest journal in the psychology of religion published out of Germany. However, it had little impact in America, and few Americans published in it. We decided that we needed a journal that would seek to solicit research from psychology of religion worldwide. In 1991 *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion (IJPR)* emerged with Erlbaum's support. Its success was immediate, largely due to the wise move to get library subscriptions which in the beginning exceeded or matched individual subscriptions. Initially Laurie Brown and Newton Malony were coeditors. I also served as book review editor from 1990 to 1992. Later (starting with Volume 5) I coedited this journal with Malony and Brown. I resigned as editor when I accepted the offer to edit the *JSSR*. The history of *IJPR* is complex largely because it has never been associated with any society. The process of selecting and replacing editors became chaotic and driven primarily by the commercial concerns of the publisher. For a while its future was uncertain. Its stabilization has come with Ray Paloutzian established as a more or less permanent editor.

In 1994 I accepted an offer by Don Capps to apply for editor of *JSSR*. There had been only three psychology editors of *JSSR*: Jim Dittes, Don Capps, and Richard Gorsuch. I negotiated institutional support and a course reduction should I be appointed editor and the assurance that my colleague Paul Watson who had moved from physiological psychology into the psychology of religion could be made managing editor.

I received my appointment and in my 4-year stint (from 1995 to 1999) I tried hard to broaden the base of the psychology of religion in *JSSR*. I organized the table of contents in each issue under such rubrics as empirical studies, historical studies, phenomenological studies, and so on. This allowed me to endorse a broader view than simply measurement-based studies and to publish articles in areas neglected by *JSSR* such as cultural psychology (Jacob Belzen) and phenomenology (Howard Pollio and W. Paul Williamson). Paul Watson was extremely helpful as managing editor. He shares my broad view of the psychology of religion and became a collaborator with me (and vice versa) on many publications.



Jacob Belzen moved to reorganize the International Association and its yearbook, the *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*. I agreed to cooperate, attended the International Association for the Psychology of Religion and was elected to the board of the association and to coedit the journal with Jacob Belzen and Nils Holm. As a yearbook, the editorial load was much less than *JSSR* but I was pleased to be part of the *Archiv's* revival. It also was one of the catalysts for a friendship, necessarily mediated more by email than direct contact, with Jacob A. Belzen. When we can meet at conventions either in the United States or in Europe it is a pleasure. Jacob Belzen is the only person I know in psychology whose interests are as broad as mine and who reads perhaps even more widely than I. We also have grand fun with what increasingly often are public disagreements of our differing views of psychology of religion. Our disagreements also have found their way into print as we have mutually criticized aspects of each other's work without negative effects on our friendship.

After Jacob Belzen's editorial term I remained and am currently a coeditor. Under considerable pressure from the publisher Heinz Streib, James Day, and I proposed to the board of the International Association that the *Archiv* move to a journal format with three issues per year. It remains to be seen if this will work well, but it has been able to attract more submissions from American psychologists and to give the *Archiv* with its predominance of European authors a broader visibility in America.

Working with Heinz Streib came about by another fortuitous circumstance. James Richardson had been hired at Nevada (sociology) soon after I had graduated. He has had a strong career in the sociology of religion and has been one of the few sociologists to also continue to do crossover research in psychology of religion. When Heinz Streib was seeking an American to help with a project on deconversion, he sought Jim Richardson's advice. Richardson recommended Streib meet with me and that began both a friendship and ongoing collaboration on research that continues today (Streib, Hood, Keller, Csöff, & Silver, 2009). I have fond memories of being with Heinz in Germany on many occasions, and eating Heinz's cooking, something any gourmet would envy.

If there is a lesson to be learned from editorial work, it is that an editor has immense power to influence what is published. Few submissions cannot be contested and the editor can select reviewers in a fashion to assure positive or negative reviews. Regardless, the increasing numbers of journals related to psychology of religion (now too numerous to mention here) clearly defines the re-emergence of the field. Division 36 now has its own journal, *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* assuring its success and ironically standing where we had hope *IJPR* would be.

## **Conceptual and Empirical Research on Mysticism**

My involvement in textbooks and journal editing made me aware of the range of options for psychology of religion and the narrowing of that range based upon what is allowed to be published. Measurement and methodology had assured that I could

have a voice in the resurgence of the psychology of religion in America, but I was more moved by issues raised by my reading of Freud and James than by my surveys of the empirical measurement-based literature. If there was a turning point in my research career it came from James's own interest in mysticism. I had developed the REEM but it did not satisfy me as a measure of mysticism. (Ironically it was too Jamesian.) The psychiatry and psychology literatures on mysticism were too restrictive and dismissive of mysticism and much of this I thought to be due to a lack of clarity in the meaning of the term. Without such conceptual clarity I felt I would simply be caught in the dilemma of my early work with creativity, measures of a construct that did not mesh and therefore could not be guided by any conceptual analysis. Finding W. T. Stace's *Mysticism and Philosophy* (1960) was a turning point for me, mainly for its conceptual and phenomenological clarity.

Reading Stace's analysis of the common core to mystical experience allowed me to use his phenomenological clarification of mystical experience to develop an empirical measure. In 1975 I published the first paper on a measure of mysticism based upon Stace's common core thesis (Hood, 1975). Richard Gorsuch was editor of *JSSR*, and my submission was deliberately timed to make sure the measurement basis of my concern with mysticism would be recognized. Thus, mysticism could be studied in the American tradition if I could establish that it could be measured. My focus since then has been on using the empirical study of mysticism to begin a dialogue in much broader issues in psychology, philosophy, and theology. I have always carefully used my scale as a measure of *reported* experience and have been as interested in what affects the report of experience as well as the experience itself. I am persuaded that Stace is correct in his distinction between experience and interpretation and that cultural and linguistic factors influence the expression of experience and are not exclusively determinant of the experience. This has been the bulk of my empirical and conceptual writings on mysticism that accounts for the majority of over two hundred publications that pepper my *vita*.

My passion for mysticism keeps me intrigued with philosophical and theological works on mysticism, both classic and contemporary. My empirical work has proven that mysticism can be triggered in a variety of quasi-experimental conditions from nature experiences to the use of sensory isolation tanks. It is this research that gave me several opportunities. One was to meet Bob Jesse, founder of the Council of Spiritual Practices; and instrumental in reintroducing the study of psilocybin and the elicitation of mystical experiences with research supported by the council at Johns Hopkins University. The other was to spend a month with Laurie Brown when he headed the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre at Oxford (now at the University of Wales, Lampeter) in which I explored the massive material collected from elicitation of reports of religious experiences from a variety of sources and found that few were actually what I would identify as mystical. It was while in Oxford that I met Leslie J. Francis whom I was later to nominate for the William Bier award which he received.

My trip to Oxford was the first of many to Western Europe. Lecturing outside of America (including Egypt and Poland) made apparent just how different America is, especially with respect to religion. However, it also affirms my view that mysticism

is a strong candidate for a cultural universal that is central to the common core theory. I continue to conceptually defend this and to find empirical data that support this view.

The universality of the common core theme is based upon the common factor structure of my mysticism measure in cultures as diverse as Iran, America, and Tibet. I have never thought the common core denied in any sense cultural and linguistic factors that make an expression of experience unique. My future work will surely center on mysticism. Furthermore I have found that in many ways my reading of Freud, Jung, James, and my tracing of the tradition of authoritarian personality research have been far from wasted as each can be used to shed light on this topic that remains my passion.

## The Serpent Handlers of Appalachia

My research on the serpent handlers of Appalachia came about from my reaction to the publication of two deaths of serpent handlers in the early 1970s that occurred in my state. The news media sought the opinion of experts and our distinguished chair in religious studies and our most senior sociologists both gave widely reported explanations for a tradition neither had studied nor had attended a single service. Their discrediting explanations infuriated me. I had hiked in the Appalachian mountains and knew of these people and their tradition. An historian, David Kimbrough, read about me and my interest and visited me in Chattanooga. He was working on a dissertation on the Saylor family, serpent handlers out of the Trinitarian tradition handlers, later published as *Taking up Serpents* (Kimbrough, 1995). Together we visited a church in Georgia that was emerging as a dominant church in the Jesus or oneness tradition. I began my decision to document with video as much of this tradition as possible. With a former student of mine, W. Paul Williamson, we traveled over much of Appalachia for over 15 years documenting services, interviewing handlers, attending their homecomings, and even funerals of those fatally bitten. Paul was accepted to the PhD program in psychology at Knoxville which had a unique phenomenological tradition under the guidance of Howard Pollio. I urged him to do his thesis on serpent handlers and we began the process of gradually publishing a variety of studies of serpent handlers, some phenomenology, some quasi-descriptive. It gave me a chance to study the history of the tradition, early debates over the Gospel of Mark, and archival research on reports of the tradition in the church and popular press media (Hood & Williamson, 2008a). It also solidified my continuing work with Paul, my closest American colleague and friend.

Studying the serpent-handling tradition allowed me to meet marvelous persons outside of academia, with wisdom culled from life experience, not books. Jimmy Morrow, an unlettered preacher in the handling tradition has a superb mastery of the oral history of the tradition and his own archive of clippings and his own tediously typed out manuscripts covering over 10,000 pages. His material had been pirated by scholars who gave him no credit. I vowed to correct this and worked with him; in 2005 I edited *Handling Serpents: Pastor Jimmy Morrow's Narrative History of His*

*Appalachian Jesus' Name Tradition*. Paul and I took him and his wife to an Appalachian Studies conference where he signed copies of his book and smiled at academic presentations purporting to explain what he knew to be false from his own experience. I sensed he must feel as I felt when I first took psychology courses at UCLA. I continue to marvel at the blindness of much of social science and the methodological limitations of third-party explorations of other's experiences. I tried to do justice to this when I finally published in 2008 collaborative research (with W. Paul Williamson) of over 15 years of research on this tradition in *Them That Believe: The Power and Meaning of the Christian Serpent-Handling Tradition*.

## Another Paul F. Secord Connection

One of my colleagues that I met at SSSR was Peter Hill. I remember him talking to me about a measurement book he was trying to get SSSR to support. He was unsuccessful and I told him I could help. James Lee of Religious Education Press had approached me years earlier to produce an edited volume that was published as *Handbook of Religious Experience* in 1995. Lee's press was unique in that it was run out of the basement of his house and all books were kept continually in print. I assured Peter that I could get James Lee to publish his book. Before the meeting we over, we had a contract with Religious Education Press for what was published as *Measures of Religiosity* (Hill & Hood, 1999). However, more than an edited measures book came from my almost chance linking up with Peter Hill.

Pete had taking a seminar with Paul F. Secord, who had moved from Nevada to Harvard having divorced his first wife and marrying Marcia Guttentag. Her untimely death led Paul to take an endowed chair at the University of Houston where Pete was a doctoral student. Meeting Pete seemed almost an instance of synchronicity to me. We first became "convention" colleagues. When Guilford wanted a text on fundamentalism, Pete approached me along with Paul Williamson and we published *The Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism* with Guilford Press in 2005. When Bruce Hunsberger died, I selected Pete (with Bernie Spilka's approval) to come on board for the fourth edition of *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. We undoubtedly will be coauthors on future editions. Another outcome of my meeting with Pete is a link with the Templeton Foundation. Pete acquired some Templeton Funds to aid in the completion of the measures book and to help in the considerable cost of permission to reprint copyrighted material.

## The Templeton Foundation

The emergence of Templeton Funds in American psychology of religion has been transformative. I was first acquainted with Templeton when I was (along with Ken Pargament) to participate in a conference concerned with spirituality and health under the direction of David B. Larson. Since then I have been involved in many

Templeton conferences, including Solomon Katz's direction of projects on spiritual transformation, and a current research project on Godly love directed by Matthew Lee, Margaret Poloma, and Stephen Post. I also have served as outside reviewer for many proposals submitted to the Templeton Foundation.

Critics of Templeton abound, perhaps none more vocal in America than David Wulff. Critics challenge the huge influx of Templeton Funds into projects that some see as serving a conservative religious agenda. Many of the people involved in the resurgence of the psychology of religion in America can now be linked directly or indirectly to Templeton Funds. However, Templeton funding *followed* the resurgence of interest in the psychology of religion in the 1960s and now simply tries to influence the direction it takes.

Many of the criticisms of Templeton remind me of a whining by left-wing authoritarians. I find this more than a little amusing for several reasons. First, it follows the pattern of American psychology that has always had partly an agenda served by benefactors that control projects to be funded. The APA was initiated and sustained in the early years by benefactors who wanted research of spiritualism and people like G. Stanley Hall used such funds to debunk spiritualism. William James was the notable exception. Second, the Templeton Foundation has never done anything to alter professional opinions of proposals. All they do is reserve the right to fund proposals as they see fit. Finally, the Templeton Foundation seeks to fund research that will be highlighted in top-tier journals, independently peer-reviewed. If Templeton funding is to alter the face of psychology of religion it is due to social and cultural forces of which psychologists are only a small part. The resurgence of the psychology of religion was largely an unfunded resurgence. One can complain of American psychology being driven by the availability of money. If researchers seek funds, the direction of their research may be determined by the funding agency, whether the National Science Foundation or the Templeton Foundation. However, nothing in Templeton procedures assures any outcome. In my own work with my friend Margaret Poloma, we secured Templeton Funds via Stephen Post's Institute of Unlimited Love (created with Templeton funds) to study a religious cult in Atlanta claiming the power to transform the lives of Atlanta's inner city homeless in a fashion congruent with Sir John Templeton's. Our study documented the falsity of this claim (Poloma & Hood, 2008).

People can, if they wish, follow their own vision and not Sir John's. One can complain of American psychology being driven by the availability of money but my entire career has been largely unfunded. For instance, a benefactor donated an isolation tank to me, and with limited university support, I turned four unused laboratory rooms into a research facility that included a shower, an observation room, and elaborate electrical circuits both to heat the tank and to assure communication. Many of the materials were salvaged and creatively combined from old laboratory equipment. It was as if I were back creating rat mazes and shocking at UCLA. Today, this research could easily qualify for a million-dollar Templeton grant (if they would fund it). Most of the major figures in the resurgence of psychology of religion could tell similar stories and attest to the limited funds by which they did their research.

However, there is a caveat that ironically returns me to my early experience with Unity by the Sea. It was only recently when I was reading Sir John Templeton's *Possibilities for Over One Hundredfold More Spiritual Information*, that I became aware that part of the Templeton Foundation's mandate is to support other charities and organizations that are consistent with Sir John Templeton's vision (Templeton, 2000). The Unity School of Christianity of Unity Village and the Association of Unity Churches is explicitly cited. Maybe this is another instance of synchronicity? And perhaps this is another reminder that whatever fuels my passion for mysticism, I remain committed to the sense that after all the chatter, and all the explanations, and after a life's worth of work it shall be said, "But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

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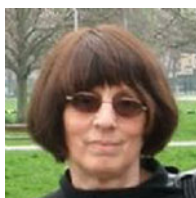
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## Chapter 8

# Changing Ways of Doing Things: An Autobiographical Account of Some of My Experiences in the Psychology of Religion

Kate Miriam Loewenthal



### How and Why Psychology?

I had two early ambitions. One was to be teacher. My father discouraged that. He had what seemed to be a perfectly satisfactory career as a classroom and head teacher, but felt disappointed that his family circumstances hadn't allowed him to go to university; teacher training in the early twentieth century was seen as a second best to university. My mother's views and experiences were similar. She could have gone to university, she said, but the funding for her university place was contingent on teaching thereafter. So she opted to go straight into the workplace, but felt intellectually frustrated in her office jobs, and always regretted missing out on university. My intellectually frustrated parents said they were sure that "these days" (late 1950s) you can achieve whatever you set your mind to. They certainly encouraged serious reading. Our house was lined with books: history, biography, science, religious, and literary classics. So in our family, we read and read.

It was possible to get into university with respectable examination performance. Incredible as this might seem now, in those days full funding for tuition and subsistence

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K.M. Loewenthal (✉)

Emeritus Professor, Royal Holloway, London University; Visiting Professor, Glyndwr University, Wales; Visiting Professor, Heythrop College, London University; Professor of Abnormal Psychology, New York University in London, New York, NY, USA  
email: c.loewenthal@rhul.ac.uk

was virtually automatic. I abandoned the idea of teaching, and my second ambition was conceived, to practice medicine, preferably among the socially deprived or even in the third world. That ambition lasted almost until the eve of registering as a medical student. At that point a doctor, who as a family friend took an avuncular interest in my career, offered to donate his skeleton to me, that is, the skeleton he had used as a medical student. It was actually a half skeleton, though the skull was complete. This made me wonder what was done with the remaining bones, and now, I am suspicious about how these skeletons were obtained. This offer was a generous one, because skeletons were extremely expensive, and I accepted gratefully. The skeleton came with a copy of the classic text, Gray's *Anatomy*. I don't have a good visual or rote learning memory, never did, and the thought of learning the exact locations and names of those thousands of nerves, bones, muscles, sinews, blood vessels, lymph vessels, and organs did not excite me. Our doctor friend told me that few medical students enjoyed this aspect of their studies, which was generally found difficult and dull, but very necessary. Meanwhile a school friend had decided to read psychology, then a relatively new field of study, with few departments in U.K. universities. She sounded very excited, and she also told me that she had been warned that statistics was supposed to be very difficult. To cut a long story short, I bought a statistics book (it was Moroney's, [1956 Facts from Figures](#)) and decided its contents looked much more fun than anatomy, gave up my place in medical school, returned the skeleton and Gray's *Anatomy*, and found a place to read psychology. To anticipate, I did indeed become a stats-aholic, and have remained one.

## Being a Psychology Student and Getting Married

In 1960, I entered the psychology department at University College London. There were about a dozen members of the academic staff, three or four technical staff, and about a dozen research students. There were altogether about sixty undergraduates in the various stages of their 3-year degree course. I offer these numbers to illustrate how, by current standards, this department was tiny. It was nevertheless one of the largest and most prestigious of U.K. psychology departments.

My interest in the psychology of religion was piqued by the studied lack of attention mixed with scorn given to this topic. In one lecture, we were told that church attendance was declining, and that religion was disappearing. In another lecture, we were offered enthusiastic descriptions of rats in Skinner boxes, very ecologically unsound work by current standards, with the poor animals' behavior totally decontextualized. We were told that if the rat's behavior, pressing a bar that might deliver food, was rewarded randomly and intermittently, the rat would press the bar fast and frequently. The lecturer explained that much human behavior could be understood analogously, for instance, people would pray frequently even though they were rewarded infrequently. And in another lecture it was explained that it had been established in the nineteenth century that prayer was not effective: monarchs are more frequently prayed for than other people, but their lives are significantly shorter. I do not think you need a huge intellect to realize that this was a poorly

designed piece of research: a better research question could have been what is the life span of monarchs who are prayed for compared with that of monarchs who are not prayed for? Or more feasibly and usefully, what are the factors that shorten monarchs' lives?

The last of this quite long list of memories about how religion figured in psychology in the 1960s actually does feature some respectable albeit controversial theory and research, an improvement on the previous examples I have described. H. J. Eysenck had proposed a two-dimensional model of human personality (see Eysenck, 1998). One dimension was introversion–extroversion, and the other, neuroticism–stability. Eysenck suggested that neurotic introverts would be more readily conditioned than those with other personality configurations. Stable extroverts, by contrast, would be less readily conditioned and thus less fearful of the consequences of wrongdoing. These would be tough-minded: psychopaths and criminals. The readily conditioned neurotic introverts, the tender-minded, would be the more religious. The empirical support for this subsequently became quite complex, but my interest in the topic was aroused by an exuberant lecturer, Bob Green, who asked us the question: if Eysenck is right, was Torquemada tender-minded?

At about this period in history, Gordon Allport was waging a more or less solitary battle to establish the psychological study of religious activity, thought and feeling as a reputable twentieth-century venture (Allport, 1950). I did not become aware of this until nearly a decade after graduating in psychology. But Gordon Allport was pointing a possible way to addressing the challenging question about Torquemada.

As a research student, still at University College London, I struggled with some of the ideas of Vygotsky about the relations between language and thinking (Vygotsky, 1934/1962). I was particularly interested in self-addressed private speech, its characteristics, and the role it plays in reasoning. Those were exciting times. Psychology was developing rapidly. Being interested in language, I hung around the fringes of the burgeoning psycholinguistics industry, spearheaded by Chomsky. My PhD supervisor was the benign, brilliant, and supportive Peter Wason, who was a leading pioneer in the study of reasoning, and also a chess master. There was a lively group of fellow research students, many of whom went on to establish themselves in cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics. There was never a dull moment in the research offices reached by climbing dozens of steep stairs to the attic floors of the U.C. psychology department, overlooking Gordon Square, and the kettle never grew cold.

While completing my PhD I had the good fortune to meet and marry Naftali Loewenthal, and our marriage has been a long and happy one, now thankfully over halfway through its fifth decade. More on our marriage and children and their impact on my pursuit of the psychology of religion follows.

## Early Academic Career and Young Motherhood

As I was finishing my PhD in 1966, I was offered an assistant lectureship in the University of Wales, in Bangor, close to Snowdonia. This remains my favorite corner of the British Isles. Although I've lived most of my life in London, and agree

with Dr. Johnson that one cannot be bored in London, the mountains and mists of Snowdonia are much loved. Interest in the psychology of religion was definitely quiescent then. In the late 1960s I was preoccupied with preparing new teaching material in language and cognition, social psychology and research methods, and allied research and writing. We lived far from any major Jewish community, and we were expecting our first child. We agreed to maintain a religious and kosher home. This took some effort, having to obtain kosher food from Manchester, and was particularly difficult for my husband who as a man had a greater spiritual need (and obligation) than I did for communal prayer facilities. We realized we would have to move back to London for the sake of our daughter's schooling.

Academically, I was conscious of a dual identity. I liked psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology, and enjoyed teaching in those areas. I was also asked to teach some social psychology, which I thoroughly enjoyed, but had difficulty in linking those two sets of interests. Nowadays, such a linkage is commonplace in cognitive social psychology, but back then, although I felt that there were pointers in Vygotsky's work, I had no one with whom to discuss these. At that time, in the late 1960s in my neck of the academic woods, I seemed to be the only Vygotsky fan. My second year in Bangor was spent on a junior fellowship from the Medical Research Council, and I continued to develop my research in language and cognition. When Tully (my husband) and I agreed to move back to London (1968), I obtained a lectureship at the City University. He enrolled in the undergraduate Hebrew and Jewish studies course at University College London, where he continued to complete his PhD, and subsequently to lecture and write on Jewish mysticism.

At City from 1968 to 1972, I continued to teach language and cognition, and to do research in that area. I taught and dabbled in research in social psychology, and (as at Bangor) taught some research methods. Recalling those research methods (lab) classes, my overwhelming desire was to make them interesting and fun. I was convinced that then there would be some learning, and that what was learned would be useful in spite of so many students grumbling that it was "irrelevant," perhaps a very '60s complaint. Now, looking back on my own undergraduate learning, I realize that I don't find it particularly useful to remember the content of the lectures. I did develop serious enthusiasm for psychology's more exciting writers, and I still greatly enjoy that kind of excitement. The generalizable skills, particularly writing and critical thinking, are very valuable. The research methods and statistics are probably the most useful things I learned as a psychology undergraduate. These tastes for intellectual excitement, good writing and thinking, and research and statistical skills have stayed with me. Much as I enjoy all these, I'm not convinced that I have managed to generate any of them successfully, but I'm still trying.

My professional academic activity was carried out against a backdrop of life as a practicing orthodox Jewess. As for male orthodox Jews, this means not being able to eat in the university dining facilities, or indeed in any restaurant, because of the necessity for kosher food. The observance of the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat) and festivals meant some hair-raising rushing on Friday afternoons, and on other days in the autumn and spring festive seasons. In one respect, life is simpler for orthodox women: they do not have to worry as much as men about the timing of the daily prayers. But

the reason for this let-out is that women have primary childcare responsibilities; although I hasten to add that orthodox Jewish men including my husband are excellent, highly involved fathers and homemakers. I am sure I am not the only parent in academia who has struggled to stay awake through a day of teaching, meetings, and supervision, after a typical night's work marking, data analysis, and writing, while trying to console crying, coughing, and/or vomiting children. Our first child, a daughter, was born during our 2 years in Bangor. Our second and third children, a daughter and a son, were born while I was at the City University. In parallel with this, Tully continued to develop his academic work in Jewish studies, and a personal interest in Hasidic Judaism.

Initially I did not share this enthusiasm. He had become involved with a style of Hasidism (Bratzlav), which involves spiritual enthusiasm. This seemed to me insufficiently grounded for my spiritual needs, struggling with the realities of sleepless toddlers, and homemaking, coupled with the demands of academia. When Tully gravitated to Chabad-Lubavitch, I became much more attentive. Here was an intellectually exciting and satisfying body of mystical works, and leadership in tune with the full range of contemporary realities. Moreover, the Chabad kindergarten and school were the closest and the most attractive of the local options for our children's education. From the beginning of the 1970s, I developed an attachment to Chabad, which has remained and developed throughout my life. Tully became a full-time worker for Chabad (alongside his fellowship at University College), specializing in adult education, and I have tried to support this work although very conscious of limited resources.

In 1972 I moved from the City University, to Bedford College, part of the University of London. In 1985, Bedford was merged with Royal Holloway. The years 1972–1985 at Bedford College in Regent's Park, were very happy. The head of the psychology department was the benign Brian Foss, a productive researcher on infant development. All colleagues were kind and delightful, tolerant, and respectful of my religious eccentricities.

As at City and Bangor, my teaching at Bedford involved language and cognition which was supposed to be my area of research interest and expertise, social psychology because nobody else really wanted to teach it, and research methods because we were all expected to lend a hand with this unpopular but necessary chore. The social psychology teaching had a particularly interesting benefit. My colleagues in psychology thought that the worst aspect of social psychology teaching was delivering a course to the sociology students, in the sociology department. My colleagues saw this as very down-market activity, involving the "softest" kind of psychology. I found it stimulating and enjoyable, and it enabled me to make the acquaintance of Bernice Martin, a distinguished sociologist of religion. This was shortly to give me the needed confidence that the study of religion, religious behavior, religious beliefs, and their impact was an exciting and worthwhile academic venture.

I began to worry when our fourth child was on the way. At that time (1974) there was little general enthusiasm for "working mothers" outside the women's liberation movement. I certainly noticed this lack of enthusiasm in the orthodox Jewish community, but it was apparent in the wider community too. The children of working

mothers were neglected, it was believed. Mothers who worked were seen as selfish. I certainly found life tiring, and felt personally inadequate. I began to wonder whether I could cope with the conflicting multiple demands of academia, motherhood, homemaking, and religious Jewish observance. Thankfully, I decided to consult a leading rabbinic leader, the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn) who reassured me that was no conflict. This was very empowering, and my career in academia lurched on. I was extremely grateful to my colleagues at Bedford, who were very tolerant about my frequent maternity absences. I was wary about exploiting their goodwill too greatly, and tried to keep up with my fair share of teaching, examining, research, and research supervision, but there were many occasions on which their willingness to accommodate my needs was really appreciated.

## Starting on the Psychology of Religion

My career in the psychology of religion began very abruptly in 1974. My boss, Brian Foss, stopped me in the corridor. "Kate," he said, "I've just met a very interesting philosopher from Kings College, called Hywel Lewis. I'm sure you would like him." Well yes, I thought, but why should I ever have anything to do with him? Brian went on to explain that Hywel was battling to establish a religious studies degree at Kings College. Kings had a very strong theology faculty, and apparently the faculty was not excited about developing and hosting Hywel's pet degree. But the degree had been born, and was running, and Hywel needed a psychologist to teach "The Psychology of Religion." Brian smiled triumphantly. "You're religious, so I'm sure you can do it." He added that Professor Lewis would like to meet me as soon as possible.

Brian also handed me a book, *Psychology and Religion*, edited by L. B. Brown (1973). It was published by Penguin, which was a guarantee of both interest and academic reputability. Laurie Brown had been teaching psychology of religion at Kings, but had returned to an academic post in his native antipodes. I forgot whether this was Australia or New Zealand. Laurie traveled frequently, especially to Oxford where he collaborated with Michael Argyle, and I was soon to have the pleasure of meeting him. But at that time, I was grateful to have his book as a starting point. He had completed his PhD at Bedford, so Brian knew him and thought well of him, and his supervisor had been Sheila Chown, who along with Monica Lawlor was a close colleague, friend, and valued mentor. I should mention that both Sheila and Monica took seriously the idea that psychology of religion was something that respectable psychologists could do, and this was very encouraging and reassuring to me, having discovered that many psychologists did not think psychology of religion was a respectable activity at all.

The meeting with Hywel Lewis at Kings College happened. He was indeed a delightful man. My memory is that he spent much of the meeting explaining the political difficulties he was having in establishing a separate religious studies department. He established my willingness to undertake the teaching, and I managed to

say something about what might be included in the course to be taught. Truthfully, I was intrigued and pretty excited about the prospect. I suppose in those days he had little choice, so I was hired to zoom over to Kings College every Thursday afternoon and teach for 2 h. I spent months reading, note-taking, and planning the course. Other work sat on the back burner while I assembled a set of lecture notes and handouts. The only computers available in those days were mainframes, which I did use occasionally to do analyses from my research; we really did sit there punching thousands of holes in hundreds of cards to enable this. Word processors were undreamed of, never mind PCs, laptops, netbooks, iPads, and the like. This is by way of explaining that those lecture notes from the 1970s have disappeared and I can't be sure what was in them. But I can remember the topics that excited and intrigued me, and I am sure they were all there: religion and prejudice; Allport's ideas about intrinsic-extrinsic religiosity and the work that ensued; Freud and particularly the father-figure hypothesis; Jung and particularly mysticism; religious and spiritual experiences; religious, moral, and spiritual development.

From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s I rushed around teaching at Bedford, and doing weekly sessions at Kings, looking after my family, and trying to develop my research and writing. Our family was growing. While I was stationed in Bedford's beautiful Regent's Park campus, we had children numbers 4–10. In 1986 I gave birth to our youngest and eleventh child, just after the Bedford College site was closed as a London University institution and Bedford merged with Royal Holloway College. For a few years, I held a joint appointment with Kings and Royal Holloway, but in 1992, reverted to a full-time appointment at Royal Holloway, where I continued to teach and develop research on the psychological aspects of religion.

Returning to the 1970s and my attempts to start research on the psychology of religion, I record that throughout the 1970s and 1980s I continued to publish work on language, cognition, and social psychology, while beginning to grapple with issues in the psychology of religion. I published 10 papers on the psychology of religion in this period, several focused on a topic important in my lifestyle: orthodox Jewish values on childbearing. As usual, I sometimes used qualitative and sometimes quantitative methods. I had not had much training in qualitative methods; the most useful training was when I was employed part-time during my student year as a market researcher, doing semistructured interviews and writing reports on this material. And when I attempted quantitative work, this involved psychometrics, another methodology that had not been taught in my undergraduate course; University College in the 1960s was strictly about training experimental psychologists. Fortunately, my colleague and mentor Sheila Chown was a real psychometrician. Teaching research methods jointly with Sheila soon had me up to speed, at least on the basics. Eventually I realized that the existing handbooks on psychometrics might be not only too advanced for my needs, but too advanced for most needs, so I wrote an introductory book (Loewenthal, 1996 (2nd ed.), 2001). This was popular: one friend paid it a great compliment by saying that it was a huge relief when it appeared: it tells us everything we are supposed to know, and that previously could not be easily found out. My early publications in the psychology of religion were quite heavily outweighed by publications on language, cognition, and social psychology.

Some early publications on religion reflected my interest in research on Judaism, and this pointed to the direction of much of my future research. I can remember going to one conference on the psychology of religion, at Lancaster University in 1976. I wish I could remember who organized it. It may have been Laurie Brown. To the best of my memory, he was certainly there, so was Leslie Francis, and so was Michael Argyle, all three of them grandfathers of psychology of religion in the United Kingdom. All were very kindly, and all generating good pioneering work in psychology of religion, very heavily dominated by psychometrics and quantification. My paper at that conference is probably best forgotten; it was on the question whether religion is a projective process, and given that those were preword-processor days, I am very relieved that I can't find a copy of it. As for Brown, Francis, and Argyle, each were influential for me. Laurie Brown's book of readings *Psychology and Religion* (1973) was a lifeline. Of their many joint and individual publications including several books, Benny Beit-Hallahmi and Michael Argyle's excellent paper "G-d as a Father Projection" (1975) met a real need in dealing with a question that preoccupied many people, both then and now. They explored the Freudian father-figure hypothesis using systematic review, then a new methodology, concluding that there was weak general support for the hypothesis, and implying that other interpretations of the findings might be possible.

Leslie Francis's achievements in setting up and securing funding for a psychology of religion unit were and are remarkable. The unit is now in the University of Warwick, but at the time was in the University of Wales. Leslie specialized in psychometric work, and he has, still has, a genius for making interesting and important interpretations of the correlational findings made by his team. The Francis study I am most fond of quoting is the one in which it was shown that the apparent association between religiosity and neuroticism was an artifact of gender (Francis, 1993).

I don't recall a meeting with Benny Beit-Hallahmi until I made a visit to Israel in the 1990s, and enjoyed his benign hospitality and very lively conversation, while admiring the stunning views of Haifa Bay from the university perched on top of Mount Carmel. Benny had just completed his annual one-month military service, obligatory for all men up to the age of 65 in this tiny beleaguered country. Benny later paid a visit to Royal Holloway and gave a lively and stimulating talk on an area of current enthusiasm, new religious movements (Beit-Hallahmi, 1992).

## **Some Changes, Hunting Research Funding, and Juggling Research Projects**

1985 marked a change for me: Bedford College merged with Royal Holloway. This caused great dismay in the psychology department. We did not want to exchange our beautiful and convenient central London campus in Regent's Park for an even more beautiful but horrendously inconvenient campus in . . . Egham, Surrey. Where on earth is Egham? Early attempts to find the Royal Holloway campus were frustrating; it took well over an hour to drive there from central London, and the college



was very well tucked away and poorly signposted. Things improved in the ensuing decades, and academically the college has emerged reliably as one of the top ten U.K. universities. I tried to cope with the long commute by arranging a half-time appointment at Kings College, at which I was already teaching part-time, with the other half of my time at Royal Holloway. This helped to move my research in a direction in which psychology of religion became a primary focus. I was thankful to Kings for the opportunity to teach and develop my interests in the psychology of religion, and benefited from the input and support of Peter Clarke, now a very eminent sociologist of religion. However, everyone who has tried a joint appointment will know how awkward it is being “half a person” in two places. I missed being (full-time) in an academic psychology department. Eventually in the early 1990s, I asked Royal Holloway if I might resume my full-time appointment there, and gave up the King’s appointment.

At Royal Holloway, my colleagues agreed to humor me and see what would happen if an optional course in the psychology of religion were offered to the final-year psychology students. To everyone’s amazement (including mine) it proved to be one of the most popular courses. I ran it until my complete retirement in 2007, and it remained very popular. For a time it was the only psychology of religion course being offered in the United Kingdom as part of a psychology degree. Some students said they had chosen to do their psychology degree at Royal Holloway because it offered the course in the psychology of religion. Students said they chose the course because it was useful for careers in clinical and related areas of psychology. Even if they weren’t religious believers themselves, they thought religion was an interesting and important feature in the lives of many people. Psychology of religion was very seldom offered in U.K. undergraduate courses, and when it was offered, it was taught in religious studies departments, rather than psychology departments. Thus Fraser Watts’ course at Cambridge comes under the aegis of the theology faculty, and Brendan Callaghan’s course at Heythrop College has only recently emerged from the religious studies and philosophy umbrella to form part of a psychology degree. Heythrop offers a unique postgraduate degree, as well, an MA solely in the psychology of religion. Brendan has recently moved to Oxford, and Joanna Collicutt-McGrath continued to care for the psychology of religion at Heythrop. As I write, I learn that she too is departing for Oxford. Meanwhile Chris Lewis at Glyndwr and Adrian Coyle at Surrey are about to launch psychology of religion courses as components of psychology degrees, so the psychology of religion is gaining ground as an accepted part of psychology in the United Kingdom, although it’s little by little.

In the late 1980s I began to invest serious effort into obtaining funding for research on the psychology of religion. As mentioned, I had already completed some research, unfunded, and had written a number of papers on the psychology of religion. Some of this work focused on Judaism. I was intrigued by Brown and Harris’s (1978) finding that heavy childcare burdens could make women more vulnerable to depression. George Brown and Tirril Harris were actually colleagues in Bedford College at the time, and I had known Tirril since we both completed psychology degrees at University College at the same time. I was an ordinary undergraduate and she was a lofty “qualifier,” completing the degree in 1 year because she

already had a degree. In her case the degree was the Oxford PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics). She had gone on to work with George Brown and their inclinations and skills complemented each other: George's sociological background led to strength in qualitative interviewing and interpretation of that material, and Tirril's psychology gave strength in precise categorization, rigorous assessment, and statistical analysis. They had a major research program in medical sociology.

Their most important innovation was in the assessment of contextual stress: they argued that attempts to show relations between stress and illness were inadequate because stress measurement did not reflect the idiosyncrasies of individual situations. For example, all robberies would be categorized at the same stress levels, regardless of context and meaning. They had developed a sophisticated method of assessing contextual stress from individual accounts of events and difficulties in their Life Events and Difficulties Schedule (LEDS). I was impressed and intrigued by the definition of contextual stress as the level of stress that would be experienced by the average individual in those circumstances. Brown and Harris showed a clear connection between contextual stress, vulnerability factors, and psychiatric illness, and in later work went on to include physical illness in their remit. Some of their work had covered religious factors, which reassured me that their methodology could cope with religion.

When I met with Tirril to talk about my ideas, she was supportive and enthusiastic. Their unit was in the process of developing work with the LEDS in different countries and cultural contexts, and my interests fitted in with this process. I was invited to participate in LEDS training, having been fortunate in securing Nuffield Foundation funding for a preliminary study on stress, depression, and anxiety among Jewish women in the United Kingdom. I was joined at that point by Vivienne Goldblatt, an experienced counselor from the Jewish community. Vivienne's enthusiasm, experience, contacts, and status in the community were huge assets, and her personal warmth and kindness enabled a friendship and a great working relationship for many years, involving many research projects, until she and her husband left to join most of their children and grandchildren in Israel.

To digress slightly with an illustration: any uncertainty about contextual stress rating was to be resolved by team discussion, and if necessary, referral to Tirril's team at LEDS "headquarters." My team, about eight of us, a mixture of people from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish backgrounds, some religiously practicing and some not, were discussing the contextual threat rating of an event described by a young Muslim widow who was seeking a marriage partner. She had gone to a school parents' evening, and while there, a well-meaning teacher had thrust a glass of wine into her hand. When she realized what it was, she put it down straight away. Walking home with two friends, she felt they were unusually silent and were glancing furtively at her. Finally one of them asked if she often drank (alcohol). Aghast, she protested that someone had put a glass in her hand and of course she had not drunk any. She worried that they did not believe her, and in the ensuing weeks and months, realized that unlike previously, no further suggestions about potential marriage partners were being made to her. What would be the contextual threat rating of this glass of wine incident?

The Christians, whether practicing or not, felt that the incident was trivial, and the threat and consequences were exaggerated in the mind of the young Muslim woman. The two orthodox Jews were in a state of deep but helpless concern over the young woman's position. They believed her reputation was seriously damaged and her chances of a respectable marriage were shot to pieces, probably irredeemably. One said, what if my friends saw me holding a ham sandwich? My reputation would probably be sunk. To the best of my memory, the Muslims and Jews persuaded the Christians and seculars of the probable seriousness of the young woman's position, and that she was unlikely to be imagining things. This discussion has remained in my mind as a vivid and very sad example of the extension of LEDS methodology into new cultural contexts.

The Nuffield project worked out pretty well, indicating that heavy childcare responsibilities, religiously esteemed and quite well supported in the orthodox Jewish community, were not vulnerability factors for depression in the women studied. Indeed, heavy childcare responsibilities seemed to go with better mental health as far as some symptoms were concerned (Loewenthal & Goldblatt, 1993). We also obtained some funding for a questionnaire study of depression and anxiety and their social correlates in the Jewish community, looking at men as well as women. We wanted to establish the feasibility of studying men, inasmuch as they were usually overlooked in the study of depression. The excuse for not studying men seemed to be that because they were less likely to become depressed than women (e.g., Kendler, Neale, Kessler, Heath, & Eaves, 1992) it was more urgent to study women. As our experience grew, we began to suspect there might be a more pragmatic reason as well: men are less interested in talking about stress, depression, and the like than are women.

The big surprise in this study was that, among the people studied, the men actually reported *higher* levels of depression than did the women (Loewenthal MacLeod, Cook, Lee, & Goldblatt, 1993). This was contrary to tendencies reported in the general population, in which clinical depression is twice as likely among women as among men. When we obtained funding from the Economic and Social Research Council for a major life-events-and-depression study we hastened to look at gender differences in clinical levels of depression. There were none, and I began to panic. Maybe there was something wrong with our methodology, particularly perhaps sampling? We were using the best methods we could devise, but the response rate was low (just under 60%). Well, low compared with other surveys in the general population (90% or more was expected and normative), but many times higher than other studies being attempted in the orthodox Jewish community. Other research teams were reporting 10% or less, with torn-up questionnaires being returned, due to mistrust of social scientists, universities, psychologists, and all alien antireligious investigations. We could console ourselves that we had obtained rabbinic permission and support, needed to reassure mistrustful research participants. I will always remember the great personal kindness and support offered by Rabbi Dunner and his wife, who were universally respected in the strictly orthodox Jewish community, and their kindness and support has been perpetuated by their son, Dayan Dunner, and his wife.

On the gender issue, to my great relief, I discovered other work being published at about the same time (particularly Levav et al., 1993, Levav, Kohn, Golding, & Weismann, 1997) showing the same effect in other orthodox Jewish communities in the United States and Israel. As we did, Levav and colleagues also suggested that an important factor could be Jewish lack of social acceptance of alcohol use and frequenting public houses. Alcohol is a bit of two-edged weapon, but if used in moderation, it can be an effective self-administered antidepressant (see Loewenthal, 2009b). And religious Jewish men don't normally do alcohol, except for modest doses on religiously prescribed occasions. And religious Jewish women? Certainly not, alcohol use is totally beyond the bounds of the refined behavior expected among the more religious.

This alcohol-depression hypothesis became a source of interest. Further funding was obtained from the Economic and Social Research Council, jointly with Andy MacLeod, a clinical psychologist respected for his work on cognition and emotion, much of it focused on anxiety. We investigated alcohol use and alcohol-related attitudes among Protestant Christians and Jews, both practicing and nonpracticing. We used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, and were fascinated by the color and strength of the antialcohol beliefs expressed, not just by the religiously practicing Jews, but also by the religiously practicing Protestant Christians. Control, notably the dread of losing self-control, was the big issue, and religious participants offered dreaded scenarios of drunkards in pubs getting wild and throwing things around (Loewenthal et al., 2003).

Meanwhile my work in the U.K. Jewish community was indicating that there were cultural and religious differences in the factors making people vulnerable to depression and anxiety, compared to the general population in the United Kingdom. Alongside this, two enthusiastic Muslim doctoral students, Hanifa Khan and Aisha Sitwat, worked on life events in relation to religion, depression, and anxiety in the Muslim community. I developed great affection and respect for both. Hanifa and Aisha were also finding culturally and religiously specific protective and vulnerability factors in the U.K. Muslim communities.

Another project done jointly with Andy MacLeod looked at religiosity and coping among U.K. Protestants and Jews. We used life-events methodology to define who was under significant stress and could be included in the study. In this and earlier life-events studies we needed major man and womanpower. We were saved by our neighbor, Brunel University. Brunel had a work-placement scheme for their students, and many were happy to gain research experience even though we had little money to offer. In the stress and coping study, we used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. The study was designed and funded before Ken Pargament's religious coping measures (e.g., Pargament, 1997) were easily available. Although I regret that Ken's measures were not included, we used our own indices of religious trust and coping and learned a great deal from this study, which included measures and analyses that enabled us to make new suggestions. In particular, we were concerned to look at positive as well as negative effect. It was Andy MacLeod who urged this particular emphasis, and this is when I first caught the positive virus. We found that positive affect often behaved differently from negative effect in relation to both

religion and to the coping processes we studied. This left me with an enthusiasm for the growth of positive psychology, which was beginning to develop then. What we found was that religious activities and beliefs seemed to have a direct and strong impact on positive mood. The effects on negative mood and state – depression and anxiety – were less direct. The paper was called “Comfort and Joy” (Loewenthal et al., 2000), one of the few occasions, perhaps the only occasion, on which I have managed to come up with a catchy and apposite title. Religion has often been studied in relation to its distress-lowering effects, but I hope that its impact on happiness and the role this plays in distress-lowering will receive increasing attention.

Carrying out this study has certainly stuck in my mind. We were trying to recruit targeted quota samples of Protestants and Jews, some high and some low on religiosity. Everyone included in the study had to be under major stress. There was quite a large research group, including several Brunel work placement students. We came to call ourselves “The Vultures,” because of the way we kept our eyes and ears open for major difficulties in the lives of our friends and acquaintances. When we heard such unfortunate news, we tried not to feel too pleased, but we certainly arrived on the scene as swiftly as possible with our research interviews and questionnaires. One of the Brunel students arrived 1 day with the bad news that her father had received a serious leg injury in a road traffic accident. He was in a long-stay orthopedic ward whose occupants all seemed happy to participate in our project. I won’t forget the trouble we had trying to understand how we could and should react appropriately to news of the misfortunes we needed to complete our study.

There was a lot going on in my research life during the 1990s and early 2000s. I had collaborative projects going on regarding air safety, health behavior, gossip, school truancy, mental health in the U.K. Asian community, and children’s emotional and behavioral disorders (e.g., Glinert, Loewenthal, & Goldblatt, 2003; Loewenthal & Bradley, 1996). And yes, the roles of religious factors were investigated in all that work. More central to my interest in religion was work on the people’s beliefs about the roles played by religious factors in causing and curing psychiatric illnesses. This was done jointly with Marco Cinnirella, a scholarly social psychology colleague, and an extremely popular and respected teacher. Thanks to the enthusiastic Brunel work placement students, people from a range of different religious minority groups – Hindu, Muslim, Black Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and others – were interviewed and tested (e.g., Loewenthal et al., 2001).

## **Journals, Conferences, Books, PhDs – and People**

I was also kept out of mischief by collaborating with our good friend Simon Dein in the founding and development of a new journal, *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*. Tully and I first met Simon when he came to our area of London to do research interviews on how Hasidic leadership (the Rebbe) was involved in healing when Hasidim were unwell. Simon is a psychiatrist, and a keen medical anthropologist. He was made welcome in the Chabad Hasidic community and based his PhD

thesis and some joint publications with Roland Littlewood (e.g., Littlewood & Dein, 1995) on the interviews he carried out. Simon was appointed to a joint academic and psychiatric consultancy post at University College hospital. He is a very kind person, and great fun, and there's never a dull moment when he is present. His academic work is fascinating, often in collaboration with Roland, a distinguished medical anthropologist, focusing on a range of enigmas such as stigmata, spirit possession, and health beliefs in different cultural-religious groups (e.g., Dein & Sembhi, 2001). The journal clearly found or created a niche, is never short of interesting submissions, and in the 12 years since the first number, the frequency of the journal's appearance has increased from twice a year to eight times a year, being well supported by the publishing team at Taylor & Francis. As well as the editorial advisory board, the editorial team was soon joined by the energetic Chris Lewis, then at Ulster and now at Glyndwr. Chris would modestly deny being energetic, but his publication list in the psychology of religion alone would be more than some people (such as myself) could put on a lifetime c.v.! I think my favorite is his paper on cleanliness and godliness (Lewis, 1998). Later, the editors were joined by Ken Pargament. To be frank, we wanted an internationally famous and eminent name to add to what we hoped was the journal's existing luster.

Editorial work seems possible, just about, thanks to "automation" via the newish journal website. I hope we haven't lost the personal touch: in a long discussion at the International Conference on Psychology of Religion in Vienna (2009), Ray Paloutzian was concerned about losing the personal touch in the suggested automation of the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion (IJPR)*. Everyone who has dealt with Ray is left stunned by the many hours invested in the scrupulous examination and constructive suggestions made for every submission to the *IJPR*. I tried to convince Ray that he would still be able to do this, but as I write, I am still waiting to know whether he has decided to go for automation. Whether automated or not, journal editors' peace of mind is heavily dependent on the referees. If you do refereeing you know that there's no payment, but the work is usually interesting and gives one a feel for what's happening in one's area of interest. It's always a challenge to find or make time. Authors can get worried and pressured waiting for decisions on their articles, so here's some gratitude for all referees and potential referees reading this. Referees, may you always find time! And other journal editors have been a great support: everything ranging from tricky ethical issues to formats for standard replies to authors and reviewers: Ray Paloutzian, of the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, Elisabeth Arweck and Peter Clarke of the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, and David Greenberg of the *Israel Journal of Psychiatry*. I envy David and his colleague Ely Witztum for the title of their book *Sanity and Sanctity*; isn't that a wonderful title for a book on mental health and religion? The contents are very good too.

From the mid-1990s onwards our children grew older, and it became easier to leave them briefly in my husband's charge, doing a lot of caring for each other. I began to go to more conferences and to meet some of the people who had previously been only famous names. Psychology of religion conferences began to increase in number and size, although I still haven't got around to joining Division 36 of the American Psychological Association, or attending their conferences.

It seems to be widely agreed that the quality of work in the psychology of religion is greatly improving. That is certainly my impression, and shared by anyone with whom I discuss it.

As well as psychology of religion conferences, and thanks to Simon Dein, David Greenberg, Dinesh Bhugra (editor of the *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*), John Cox (former chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists), and others, I was invited to attend and speak at a number of psychiatric conferences. I have attended (and spoken at) more psychiatric conferences focused on religion, than psychology of religion conferences. For conferences, I've traveled throughout the United Kingdom, and the United States, Australia, Thailand, Israel, Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Sweden, Eire, Austria, Belgium, and The Netherlands. As with sociology, psychiatry and psychiatrists have always acknowledged the enormous importance of religion in relation to human behavior. Psychology, certainly in the United Kingdom, has been way behind. I'll take this opportunity to express my annoyance, by reporting that the BPS declined to accept a perfectly respectable (indeed interesting) symposium on the psychology of religion at one of the British Psychological Society's (BPS) many conferences during the 1990s. The BPS is slowly waking up, but back in the 1990s and early 2000s I found a much warmer welcome outside psychology, especially in psychiatry, than in psychology.

As well as psychiatric conferences, I found myself being invited to speak at religious studies conferences, Jewish studies conferences, medical conferences, and conferences on sociology as well as social and community work. I remember feeling both surprised and touched at a religious studies conference in Holland, when I alluded to the widespread report that most indices of religiosity relate weakly but reliably to most indices of well-being; the members of the audience had not heard this before, which surprised me. I was touched by the considerable excitement at the (rather stale) news that "their" ungrounded subject, religion, was being studied scientifically and was generally emerging as something that could be good for mental health.

Fragmentary memories of people, particularly from conferences . . . One conference wanted its registration fee in cash, in the local currency. The conference was in a beautiful lakeside venue, but in the middle of nowhere. Well, actually it was the middle of Sweden. The nearest cash machine was several miles away. Brendan Callaghan came to the rescue with a generous loan. I was worried that he had parted with his last pennies. He was then Principal at Heythrop, and also a Jesuit. "Don't worry," he said, "If I'm left penniless and stranded I can always find some Jesuits to take care of me; I expect you can do the same in the Jewish community." At another conference, I went with Brooke Rogers, who was then working with me as a post-doc, having recently completed her PhD on religious identity. "Is she working with you?" I was asked. "You are so lucky!" I definitely agreed. She has continued to develop her expertise on martyrdom and terrorism and related topics in the War Studies department at Kings College London, where she holds a full academic appointment. Lucky Kings!

At one conference I spent a Sabbath (Shabbat). I do not normally spend Shabbat at conferences; being strictly orthodox Jewish I can't participate in the conference activities, but on this occasion I was scheduled to speak early on Sunday morning,

so I spent Shabbat very comfortably in my room, with people popping in to visit, and occasionally wandering out to greet friends participating in the conference. I wondered what people thought of my behavior, inasmuch as a few people looked puzzled in spite of my explanations. I hoped no one was offended. I was certainly pleased that it all went smoothly and pleasantly. I don't know whether I can say the same of my talk, but let's hope that went smoothly and pleasantly too. I was scheduled to arrive at this conference on the morning after Yom Kippur (the day of atonement), so still feeling a bit wobbly from the long fast, I began looking for a taxi outside the airport and was greeted by a pleasant gentleman from the United States who said he was also trying to find a taxi to the same destination. The gentleman was Ken Pargament, who said he was also feeling dazed, having rushed from the synagogue at the end of the fast to catch his flight to Europe. Prior to this meeting, I hadn't been aware that Ken was Jewish. I had of course admired his work for some time, and had thought that as are many U.K. academics interested in the psychology of religion (Geoff Scobie, Leslie Francis, Fraser Watts, Joanna Collicutt), he was an ordained Christian minister. But he was not, simply (in his modest self-description) a not very strictly observant Jew.

At another conference in Jerusalem, I met Robert Kohn from Brown University for the first time. I definitely caught his excitement about the alcohol-depression hypothesis as it applied to the relatively high prevalence of depression among Jewish men. I remember him explaining enthusiastically how in California, where there was a much higher level of assimilation among Jews, and associated higher levels of alcohol use, the prevalence figures for depression among Jewish men were similar to those in the general population. These figures were very different from those among Jews in New York where assimilation was lower. I have a memory of all this being sketched out on a paper napkin. I like the paper napkin method of explaining things. I associate it with statistics, because a long-time colleague John Valentine, a widely sought-after statistical adviser, uses this method very successfully for transmitting lofty concepts to tiny minds such as mine. John's wife, Liz Valentine, has been a friend and colleague almost continuously since undergraduate days. Liz is a real polymath, making significant and rigorous contributions to cognitive psychology, philosophical psychology, the history of psychology, the psychology of music, the scientific study of complementary medicine, and last but not least, her work on meditation has enriched the psychology of religion.

Another memorable figure is Ana-Maria Rizzuto. She was giving a talk on her ideas about representations of the parental figures in relation to feelings about G-d. Someone (perhaps it was me) asked the inevitable question about how she responded to the accusation that her material was selected to suit her thesis. She made an impressive pause, then replied that she was using a similar methodology to the photographer: "Of course one has to select," she said. "One has to select to capture the most comprehensive and evocative image with a single click. I am offering snapshots." I offer this memory with apologies, because those words are not an exact quotation and I may have failed to capture the meaning she intended. But that powerful snapshot metaphor has remained with me. Although I've never heard anything like this metaphor used to describe or prescribe how one goes about doing thematic analysis in qualitative research, it's a pretty good description of what one is actually doing.



During these years leading up to the mid-2000s, I met and worked with so many interesting people, fine and enthusiastic academics, it's impossible to do justice to all, and to the input, stimulation, inspiration, and help I have received. There were colleagues, collaborators, and research team members at Royal Holloway, including Andy MacLeod, Clare Bradley, Mike Eysenck, Michelle Lee, Esther Spitzer, Mikki Herzog, Guy Lubitsh, Brooke Rogers, and Richard Amlot. There were psychologists of religion in the United Kingdom, and psychiatrists and others with expertise in the study of religion, many already mentioned. I have good memories of international contacts, and thanks to the arrival of the Internet, some solely via email, such as Sid Bloch (Oxford, then Melbourne), David Greenberg and Ely Witztum (Jerusalem), Jacob Belzen (Amsterdam), Ray Paloutzian (Westmont), Nalini Tarakeshwar (Yale), Lyn Bikos (Seattle), Liz Hall (Biola), Crystal Park (Connecticut), and Helmut Reich (Fribourg), among many others.

During these years, I managed to write a few books on psychology and religion (Loewenthal, 1995, 2000, 2007). This was in spite of the fact that like other U.K. academics in psychology, the main pressures were to obtain research funding and publish papers in peer-reviewed journals, preferably journals with a high citation rate. I had some success with research funding and publications, to the extent that by the year 2000, I had been promoted to a chair (full professor) in the University of London. When my children were younger, I certainly never meant to be particularly ambitious, careerwise. But I did want to do my job honestly and as well as possible. I was delighted with the promotions, and felt particularly grateful to my head of department, Mike Eysenck, who invested much effort and genuine kindness in supporting this aspect of my career. Compared to funding and research articles, books were never considered really crucial for promotion. I just wanted to write them anyway, as an expression of my interests in mental health, religion, and culture. I hope they may have contributed towards the trend moving the psychology of religion outward from its focus of convenience, western Christianity. It is now quite appropriate to understand that psychological processes vary across different cultural and religious contexts, but I can remember my frustration when together with Clare Bradley, our application for funding to study health beliefs in the religious Jewish community was turned down because the referees thought the context of study was too narrow and specific, and the findings "could not be generalised" (sic). That was in the early 1990s. It's impossible to imagine that being said now. At least I hope it's impossible.

## Service Delivery

During the last decade my interests in religion and mental health became more focused on service delivery. One impetus was the receipt of a Leverhulme fellowship to study culturally and religiously sensitive mental health service delivery in the orthodox Jewish community (Loewenthal & Rogers, 2004). This fellowship enabled me to go back to the coal face and do my own interviewing, instead of employing research assistance. This was very rewarding. In or around 2001, I was

invited by Stephen Frosh and Caroline Lindsey to collaborate in work on emotional and behavioral disorders among strictly orthodox Jewish children. Both Stephen and Caroline were practicing clinicians, very keen to develop research that would have an impact on mental health in children in the religious Jewish community (Frosh, Loewenthal, Lindsey, & Spitzer, 2005). There were several other parallel developments in this period. I was asked to join the management committee of the orthodox Jewish mental health support charity, *Chizuk* (the word is Hebrew for support and strengthening). Also in this period, Nigel Copsey asked me to examine an innovative training scheme formalizing the spiritual support being offered to psychiatric patients, and I also joined the National Spirituality and Mental Health Forum. In addition I became a member of the management board of the Arbours Trust, offering residential psychotherapeutic support to people with serious emotional and behavioral disturbances. Its director, Joe Berke, was a longstanding family friend, a psychiatrist, and psychotherapist with strong interests in spirituality and mysticism on which he has published a great deal.

The U.K. government-sponsored Sure Start program was running in this period too. Its aims were to improve the quality of life for deprived infants and young children. There was enough research showing that contrary to any belief that the Jewish community is well off, the strictly orthodox community in North London was living in conditions of serious economic deprivation. I appreciated the very effective and pleasant Sure Start leadership of Diane Heywood. My colleagues and I participated quite heavily in organizing some culturally and religiously appropriate services, and in conducting evaluations of Sure Start and Chizuk work in all the communities being served (e.g., Loewenthal, 2009a).

As a bit of a sideline, there were developments from the horrific events of 9/11 and 7/7. John Cox, then chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, organized a conference looking at how psychiatrists could respond to terrorism. I was one of only two nonpsychiatrists invited to participate, and I arrived back at Royal Holloway grumbling, as was my custom, about how the psychology establishment, unlike psychiatry, wasn't interested in religion and its effects. A colleague suggested that the British Psychology Society might be interested now, and suggested that I put forward a proposal for the BPS to fund a conference series on martyrdom and terrorism. Yes, now the BPS was waking up, though I'm sorry about what it took for this to happen. In previous years, the BPS had agreed to the establishment of special sections of the society, on Consciousness and on Transpersonal Psychology, and it was felt that a section on Religion and/or Spirituality would be redundant. By 2002–2003, it had become clear that Consciousness and Transpersonal Psychology were not going to advance the understanding of martyrdom and terrorism very greatly. The study of religion might. So we were in business, and a huge amount of effort was expended particularly by Brooke Rogers and Richard Amlot in organizing a series of three interdisciplinary conferences on martyrdom and terrorism, at Royal Holloway and, thanks to the efforts of Chris Lewis, at the University of Ulster. Thanks to Chris and Brooke, the proceedings were published online in the *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, and a jointly edited book (Lewis et al., [in press](#)) is forthcoming.

## Changing Ways of Doing Things?

It's over 30 years since I first officially and abruptly became a psychologist of religion. What have been the changes?

Publications, including the number of journals in the field, have escalated, reflecting the interest and perceived importance of the area. The *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* existed when I started teaching and researching in the area in the 1970s, but it published more sociology than psychology. The *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* was then in temporary abeyance, although it is now vigorously reviving, and the American Psychological Association is now starting a new journal in the field. In the early 1990s, Laurie Brown instigated the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. I remember him presiding over the launch with his usual diffident humor, "Don't let this make you think I know what I'm doing," he said, as he produced a sheaf of efficient-looking notes. Notwithstanding his diffidence, the journal, now edited by Ray Paloutzian, leads developments in the field. And of course, I think *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* is performing a useful complementary service in at least two respects. One is broadening study beyond the bounds of Western Christian-dominated cultures, and the other is that the journal reflects and perhaps influences the need for psychologists to engage in interdisciplinary work and dialogue.

Methods have changed and developed. The psychology of religion was dominated by questionnaires and surveys until the 1990s. By 2000 it was clear that qualitative methodology was playing an essential role, and, to a growing extent, experiments and quasi-experiments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and clinical and other case study methodology. I realize with hindsight how some of the difficulties I had in getting early work accepted and funded are, to an extent, things of the past. Referees' failures to understand the role and importance of qualitative methodology, and the importance of studying effects in different religions and cultures, produced some rejection slips which I wish I could now quote verbatim, such as the one already quoted who said studies of minority groups should not be funded because they produced culture-specific effects from which generalizations could not be made; and the reviewers who do not understand the nature of purposive sampling, claiming that more "representative" samples and "normative" data are needed. There are referees who do not see that qualitative work could ever be publishable until some quantification is done. In case this sounds as if I am a proqualitative person, I must point to my track record, which is stuffed with publications involving pretty well everything of which SPSS is capable. Of course when I started we did our stats on hand-cranked adding machines, with wails of despair when we finally finished all those sums of squares to discover that we had a dreaded negative error term; no reader under the age of 60 will know what that means, but an experience it's fun to recall. I have even done factor analyses *by hand*. That was fun too, but oh so time-consuming. I don't think I ever allowed a PhD to be completed under my supervision without an injection of quantitative work. I am sorry for any suffering inflicted on those who claimed they could not do statistics. By the time the PhD was completed, they could do statistics, apparently, and I hope I've been forgiven.

My beliefs about methodology seem straightforward: I would like to use the most appropriate methods to address the research questions under investigation. In practice this has often led to mixed methods, including methods that aren't yet well established. I certainly admit that I have done work that is not good at all, although of course it seemed like a good idea at the time. I do believe that psychology of religion is using a widening range of methods, and is asking better research questions.

I see that calls for demonstration of impact are growing. Perhaps I have noticed this because in the last decade I have been much more heavily concerned with service delivery, and particularly with the ways in which the understanding of religion and its effects impacts on mental health service delivery. My interest in the understanding and prevention of terrorism is also another area in which the psychology of religion could and should be an influence. Positive psychology is thankfully developing, and this should also contribute greatly to the effect of the psychology of religion in addressing many significant problems. I think that the importance of the impact will become increasingly evident in the psychology of religion, and if it hasn't been noticed yet, then like it or not, it probably will be.

This may help to increase the extent to which the psychology of religion is accepted as a viable and important area of psychology.

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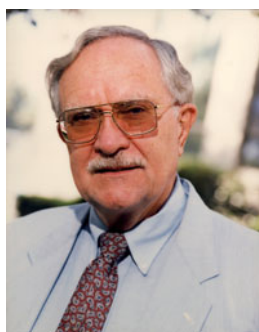
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## Chapter 9

# Evolution of a Career: Psychologist of Religion Incognito

H. Newton Malony



Thanks to Jacob Belzen for this invitation to reflect on how I became a “psychologist of religion.” I still remember a relatively new member of our faculty proclaiming some time ago “I always thought of you as ‘Fuller’s psychologist of religion,’” and feeling a little uneasy with the label. I have to admit that I never intended to become a psychologist, much less a psychologist of *religion*. Therein lies a tale, one that I welcome this opportunity to share.

For as long as I can remember organized “religion” has been a part of my life. I have come in my thinking to make a distinction between “religion” and “spirituality” and my life-experience included both from an early age. I define “spirituality” as the human capacity to experience transempirical reality and “religion” as the adopting of concepts and rituals that provide for the understanding and repetition of that experience. My earliest memories are of a mother who spoke to me of God and took me to church on a regular basis. My *spiritual* self-understanding was

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H.N. Malony (✉)

The Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, USA  
e-mail: hnewtonm@yahoo.com

always expressed in an organized *religious* manner, the Christian faith and weekly attendance at a church.

The centrality of this religious life-context became more than a formality for me because of an event that occurred when I was only 6 years old: my father died suddenly. After returning from a movie with my cousins, my mother took me into the room where he had been recovering from a bad cold. She sat down with me on the side of the bed and said, "Daddy has gone to be with God and we must so live that we will join him some day. In the meantime, God will send his guardian angels to take care of us." A night or so after his death I awoke to see a form in the room. At first, I was terrified. Then I remembered her words, "He will send his guardian angel to take care of us." I went back to sleep.

The very next Sunday after his death, we went to church just as we had always done every week of my young life. She told the associate pastor, Brother Green, that my father had died and he comforted and nurtured me. He cared for me that Sunday and for many months thereafter. "Religion" became an important part of my life from that time to the present.

I have often thought about the dynamics of my decision, at age 16, to become an ordained Methodist minister and it seems to me that such a decision makes a lot of psychological sense. My mother never remarried and my development became the central focus of her life. I remember an event that happened many years later when I was a predoctoral intern in clinical psychology. A psychiatric resident shared with me that his mother was going to be visiting him that weekend. I asked him about her visit. "Oh," he said, "After the first 24 h, it will be fine. Every time she visits, it takes her a while to get over the fact that I am not the Messiah." My mother was like that. Late in my teen years, I gave her a self-portrait for Christmas on which I had written "To my mother, who made me a minister." My vocational decision to become a minister at a summer church camp takes on meaning when I contextualize it within my father's death and my mother's rearing me within an intense religious involvement.

The next 7 years after that decision to enter a religious vocation were spent in preparation for the life of a parish minister. After 12 grades of public education in Birmingham, Alabama, I entered 4 years of study at a Methodist college and majored in history; "religious studies" were thought to be better saved for seminary training after college graduation. I minored in psychology and found that I enjoyed it more than history. Little did I know how much the study of the psychological dimensions of religion would become the focus of my career. However, I did become intrigued with how "pastoral counseling" could become a part of how I intended to minister to people in the churches I would serve.

During college I followed the Methodist church's procedures for becoming a candidate for ministry. During my last year of college, I became the weekend pastor of three small churches. I learned how to lead worship services and deliver sermons. I visited in the homes of members, prayed with the sick, and even conducted a funeral service.

Three years of religious studies at Yale University followed college graduation. I married my college fiancée and became the weekend pastor of yet another church; this time the bishop assigned me to one, not three, churches. My new wife and

I lived in a new small house after traveling 150 miles each way on Fridays and returning to the seminary on Mondays. I got lots of experience in preaching and visiting but had little or no chance to engage in counseling, a part of ministry in which I was becoming increasingly interested. Upon graduation from seminary, my interest in pastoral counseling led me to become an assistant pastor in a church in New York City where I could obtain some part-time training at the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis.

After several years of being a pastor, this counseling interest led me to pursue doctoral training in clinical psychology at George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee where I served as the chaplain of a hospital for the mentally ill, an opportunity to put my training in counseling to good use. During all of this postseminary graduate education my intent was to increase my skills in “pastoral” counseling in parish churches, not to become a psychologist, much less a psychologist of religion.

“Then why did you obtain a doctorate in ‘psychology,’ rather than in ‘pastoral counseling?’” someone might ask. Herein lay a slight alteration of the direction of my vocational plans. For several years I had been a pastor in Methodist churches. My actual decision to go back to school when I did was due to the Bishop’s decision for me to move from the church where I had been for 2 years to another church. He did not know that I had already planned to enter doctoral training in “pastoral counseling,” the next year. I did not want to become the pastor of another church for just a year and then move away. I had already contacted doctoral programs in pastoral counseling in New York, Chicago, and Boston and intended to enter one of these programs a year later. Faced with this dilemma, I decided to see if I could begin my doctoral studies within 8 weeks, the time the Bishop intended to force me to move to another church.

I quickly contacted Vanderbilt University, less than a hundred miles from the town in Alabama where I was a pastor. I was disappointed to learn that there was no doctoral program in pastoral counseling at Vanderbilt Divinity School. They suggested I explore obtaining a doctorate in psychology and taking a doctoral minor in contemporary theology at the Divinity School. I decided to apply even though I realized it would be almost impossible to get in because this was now almost 7 months after new students had been accepted. Thanks to the empathetic understanding of a graduate school dean at nearby Peabody College and the availability of a job as chaplain of a mental hospital, I was able to move my family to Nashville and begin study all within a 6-week period. At the time, I did not know how training in clinical psychology would fit into my desire to work in pastoral counseling could be recognized. But I hoped that the Methodist church would welcome a trained psychologist to work in local churches. This hope did not work out as well as I had hoped, as seen in the saga to follow. However, my training did result in a new surprise: I became a psychologist, not a pastoral counselor, and this led to my becoming a psychologist of religion.

Nicholas Hobbs, the empathic dean who gave me a chance to study toward the doctorate in clinical psychology, became my advisor and the chair of my dissertation. At the beginning of my training I was hoping to design my psychology training



in a manner that still could be adapted to church life. So, my chair approved my taking minor studies in contemporary theology at the Divinity School of Vanderbilt, which I did. During the same period I was completing research entitled *The Attempt to Establish a Secondary Drive Based on a Primary Appetitional Drive in Sixteen Albino Rats* I was always also studying *The Theologies of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr*. These 5 years were the most intense and formative years of my education.

The last year of my training I moved to Topeka, Kansas where I completed an internship in clinical psychology at the Topeka State Hospital. Training at this hospital was under the direction of the Menninger Foundation, a notable center for psychoanalytic training. I had retained a deep interest in psychoanalysis since my White Institute study just after finishing seminary. During my internship, I completed the writing of my dissertation at night while working in the hospital during the day.

The dissertation was an empirical study of pastoral counselors entitled *Human Nature, Religious Beliefs, and Pastoral Care*. This research was an attempt to apply the rigor of experimental design to the study of the assumptions underlying pastoral counseling among a sample of ministers in the Nashville, Tennessee area. First, using valid paper-and-pencil surveys, I assessed how a large group of pastors differed in their

- Attitudes toward other people: the degree to which they were optimistic or pessimistic about human nature
- Religious beliefs about the goodness or evilness of human beings and whether and how God was available to persons to help them when they sinned
- Initial responses to a set of counseling situations regarding the tendency to be directive or nondirective in their pastoral counseling

As predicted, a relationship was found among optimistic attitudes toward human nature and nondirective counseling.<sup>1</sup> Although previous research had suggested a relationship between convictions that God was judgmental and unforgiving and directive counseling, no significant relationship was found in this study.

Next, the validity of these paper-and-pencil surveys was assessed by comparing them to overt behavior of actual counseling interviews. Equal samples of seven pastors each were chosen from those pastors rated most and least directive on the basis of their written responses to the interview situations. Their counseling of an actress who presented the same problem to each of them was tape-recorded and rated by judges as to the extent to which their counseling was more nondirective or directive. Contrary to prediction based on the results of the relationships on their survey response, no relationship was found between an optimistic view of humans and nondirective counseling, as rated by judges of their actual behavior.

This was my first controlled research in the psychology of religion. The study combined my concern for pastoral counseling with the experimental and statistical

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<sup>1</sup>“Nondirective” was the label used in the early 1960s, the date of this study, for what came to be known as “client-centered” counseling.

parameters in which I had been trained in my graduate studies. As I have looked back over more than 50 years of involvement in the field, I think this study confirmed two principles I still feel are important to the field. First, I think that psychology of religion research still needs to question whether paper-and-pencil surveys always tell the truth. What persons write down on paper may not be what they really do in actual behavior. Of course, there is a need to define what we mean by “behavior.” Although I define behavior as including thoughts, words, and feelings, as well as actions, I’m inclined to think that most of us psychologists of religion would prefer to measure “actions,” that behavior that is overt, observable, and involves social interaction. In this research on counseling, I felt that what the pastors actually said to the actress/client was more valid than what they wrote down on the case studies presented to them.

The second principle I think this study exemplified was that we can design controlled studies of counseling. By “controlled” I mean studies that meet the criterion of actually measuring the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable controlling for all confounding variables and randomizing all extraneous variables. Most counseling studies suffer from the confounding variable that no two clients are alike. It is almost impossible to assess counselor functioning when they are working with different clients. In this study, I controlled this confounding variable by hiring an actress who played the very same role with each pastor. She started each session by acting as if she were a member of the church who came to the pastor with the problem, “My husband no longer wants to come to church with me. What can I do?” From that point on in the interview she interacted with the pastor out of a life situation we had designed for her. Each 30-min interview took place in the same room and was tape-recorded. Of course, there were still many uncontrolled variables that could have contaminated the results: age of the pastors, artificiality of the situation, previous counseling training, and limited time in the session, to mention only a few. My assumption was that 30 min was long enough for them to get over these limitations and lapse into their typical counseling behavior. I continued trying to emphasize this principle of controlling variables in psychology of religion research throughout my career and published an article on the issue in the 1990s (Malony, 1993).

After finishing my doctoral degree in clinical psychology in 1964, I had to make a career decision. I had to admit to myself that these 5 years of study had the effect of developing me into a psychologist, however, I remained an ordained minister whose long-range goals had been to become a pastoral counselor. I reasoned that the United Methodist<sup>2</sup> Church would jump at the chance to have a minister/psychologist who would be available to counsel their pastors when they needed it and who would train other pastors as counselors. At this time several Annual Conferences<sup>3</sup> had established centers led by a trained pastoral counselor who would offer services

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<sup>2</sup>This denomination, the United Methodist church, resulted in 1968 from the combining of The Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church.

<sup>3</sup>“Annual Conferences” is the term used by The United Methodist Church to apply to yearly meetings of churches within a geographical area. I was ordained in the North Alabama Annual Conference.

to the ministers and lay persons in that area. I approached my Bishop, Kenneth Goodsen, and asked him to appoint me to a specialized ministry as director of pastoral counseling for the North Alabama Conference of the Methodist Church. He declined. He said he would appoint me as pastor of a church and I could do pastoral counseling on the side. This did not appeal to me. His offer felt like I would have two jobs. I've often wondered whether he was suspicious of my graduate training in "psychology." Most of the persons who led pastoral counseling centers in other conferences had received their doctoral training in graduate programs within theological seminaries.<sup>4</sup>

Next, I sought a position of professor of pastoral counseling in one of our nine seminaries. No position was available. I was in a quandary. I decided to teach psychology in a Methodist college until a seminary or church position became available. I became aware that this decision afforded me the chance to continue my interest in the psychology of religion. I also had to admit that my self-understanding was changing. I had become a "psychologist."

This realization led me to accept, with some enthusiasm, the position of professor of psychology at Tennessee Wesleyan College (TWC), a Methodist-related institution in the small town of Athens, Tennessee. I was also asked to be the counselor for students who had problems. In addition, I became the clinical psychologist at the new mental health center on Saturday mornings. I taught courses across the range of psychological studies: experimental, developmental, personality, learning, social, and the psychology of religion. I became a *psychologist of religion* as well as a *pastoral counselor*.

I joined the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association and attended their national meetings. I led students in minor research projects and participated with the director of religious research of the Georgia Institute of Mental Health, Dr. Samuel Southard, in convening regional meetings of these two groups. We were especially interested in how our research could assist churches in being more effective. I remember one of those student-studies that almost got us into some difficulty within the community. We contrived with the pastor of a large Baptist church to study a way to make the sermon more interactive and, thereby, make people more involved. The plan was for the student to attend the Sunday evening service of the church. During the sermon, the student was to stand and query the pastor on some point he was making. This would have been most unusual. I also attended the service to observe what the effect would be.

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<sup>4</sup>Such doctoral programs in "pastoral counseling" were located at Union Seminary (New York), Boston University School of Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (Chicago), and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Kentucky). As I noted earlier, my original intent was to attend one of these. The decision to enter the doctoral program in clinical psychology at George Peabody College of Vanderbilt University was provoked by the speed with which I had to make a decision of whether to be appointed as a pastor in Alabama for just 1 year before leaving. Vanderbilt Divinity School (VDS) did not provide doctoral studies in pastoral counseling. However, I was able to take a doctoral minor at VDS in contemporary theology while completing the doctorate itself in "clinical psychology."

The event went as planned. As the pastor preached, the student stood up and challenged some point in the sermon. The pastor stopped and starting interacting with the student. Two of the ushers became very upset. They stood up and addressed the pastor. "Would you like us to remove this troublemaker?" they asked. At this point it became obvious that the whole congregation might become angry with the student. The pastor then revealed that he had planned the event with the student. The ushers were very embarrassed. We heard later that the officers of the church were very angry with the pastor for allowing this to occur. I was a bit chastened by the experience.

After teaching for several years I received an invitation to become a member of the faculty in the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. This appealed to me. It was a chance to teach within a theological seminary and to combine my training in clinical psychology with my seminary education. I have spent the rest of my career in that role and, although I still retain the rank of "Senior Professor," I have ceased teaching on any regular basis but continue to participate on committees from time to time. I am a retired ordained United Methodist minister and much of my research has continued to focus on "religious functioning."<sup>5</sup> The basic goal of the Fuller Seminary program is to prepare professional clinical psychologists who minor in theological studies, however, each professor develops her or his own special research interest. Students work under professors who share their interests. I have chaired over 100 doctoral dissertations, most of them focused on the psychology of religion, and I am pleased to say that I now have no misgivings in calling myself a "psychologist of religion."

Affirming myself as a psychologist of religion has not provoked me to neglect, however, the titles of "clinical psychologist" for which Fuller's School of Psychology exists or of "pastoral counselor" for which I originally sought graduate training. I have always maintained a part-time psychotherapeutic practice, taught many professional psychology courses, and supervised students in their counseling. As one of only three others in our faculty I was awarded Diplomate status by the American Board of Professional Psychology, an honor similar to being elected to the American College of Surgeons by a physician. At the same time, I have remained a member of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors in which I was honored as a fellow. I coedited *The Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Hunter, Malony, Mills, & Patton, 1990) a seminal volume of importance to the field. I have remained an ordained clergyperson and for over 25 years, I served the California/Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church by engaging in psychological evaluations of the candidates for ministry.

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<sup>5</sup>"Religious" refers here to the distinction I made earlier: to wit, that "religion is a set of concepts and rituals agreed upon by groups of persons to assure repetition of 'spiritual' experiences." Although such studies of "religious functioning" have dealt with personal as well as organizational assumptions and behaviors, my theorizing has also dealt seriously with the basic presumption that "spirituality" is a capacity that humans have to experience transempirical reality. This capacity is a possibility, not a universal instinct or drive.

Through the years, I have given special attention to two issues within the psychology of religion: conversion and religious assessment. I published two volumes on conversion: *Christian Conversion: Biblical and Psychological Perspectives* (Johnson & Malony, 1982) and *Handbook on Conversion* (Malony & Southard, 1992). I also wrote articles that detailed the psychodynamics and the cognitive function of conversion (Malony, 1986, 2003). This interest has also led to publications on religious experience and the nature of proselytism.

My concern with religious assessment was initially stimulated by Paul Pruyser, psychologist at the Menninger Foundation, with whom I became acquainted while on my predoctoral internship in clinical psychology in Topeka, Kansas. Pruyser was a serious Christian who had interests in the psychodynamics of religion and in the functioning of parish clergy. I was intrigued with both these concerns,<sup>6</sup> however, I was especially interested in his theorizing about parish clergy.

As I indicated earlier, the Menninger Foundation, in which Pruyser was the chief psychologist, was very involved in the design of case conferences of mental patients who were brought into Topeka State Hospital where I was an intern in clinical psychology. All of the involved professionals at the hospital would present their analysis of each patient at the case conferences. Nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and chaplains, interestingly enough, gave their reports. The chaplain interns were ordained clergy who were preparing to work in other hospitals around the country. As Pruyser observed the functioning of the chaplains he became concerned that their reports seemed to parrot the reports of the psychiatrists and social workers. They tended to use concepts that came out of those disciplines in their report of the religious status of the patients. Pruyser noted that these were times in which psychiatric and psychological ideas were very popular in the wider culture. He felt this idolizing of those disciplines was depriving the case conferences of the concepts that were foundational to the beliefs and practices of the religious faiths in which the chaplains had been ordained. He began to theorize about how they might best incorporate these age-old convictions into how religion could be used in their understanding of patients' functioning.

I was in on some of Pruyser's initial theorizing about these issues. While I was still at the hospital, he tried out some of his initial ideas on clergy conferences to which clergy from around the country as well the chaplain interns came for training. I kept in contact with Pruyser during the years that followed and became enthused about standardizing his model when he published *The Minister as Diagnostician* (Pruyser, 1976). Pruyser suggested a sevenfold model for use by pastors and chaplains to assess the differential ways in the client/patient was employing Christian teachings in his coping with reality. Assessing the status of each of the seven dimensions would theoretically result in the pastor/chaplain determining areas for counseling that might result in more optimal religious functioning and, thereby, in greater mental health. In a general sense, this model followed the profile model of the

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<sup>6</sup>After his death, Bernard Spilka and I edited a volume in his honor (Malony & Spilka, 1991).

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Profile, an assessment tool in psychiatry/psychology used to assess psychopathology.

The seven dimensions of Pruyser's model were (described optimally):

1. *Awareness of God*: The degree to which the persons are aware that they were created by God in God's image.
2. *Acceptance of God's grace and steadfast love*: The degree to which persons know that God loves them unconditionally.
3. *Being repentant and responsible*: The degree to which persons take responsibility for their own feelings and actions; they can accept forgiveness.
4. *Knowing God's leadership and direction*: The degree to which persons trust God's leadership, yet take responsibility for their own decisions.
5. *Involvement in organized religion*: The degree to which persons engage in regular involvement with other Christians in worship, prayer, study, and service.
6. *Experiencing fellowship*: The degree to which persons experience fellowship at various levels of intimacy with other believers.
7. *Being ethical*: The degree to which persons are experiencing faith as the prime directive in their lives.<sup>7</sup>

Pruyser envisioned his model as a structure for interviews that would lead to an interpretive essay such as a chaplain's case report in a psychiatric case study or a church pastor's notes for understanding in pastoral counseling. I embraced Pruyser's model and attempted to standardize it as a tool that could be widely used, even by professionals who were not themselves Christian. I added an eighth dimension labeled *Affirming Openness in Faith*. I defined this dimension as, "The degree to which persons felt their faith was the prime focus of life yet who were tolerant of others' points of view and open to dialogue."

Initially, my students followed Pruyser's intent by designing a structured interview schedule that included standard questions for each of the dimensions. We called it *The Religious Status Interview*. Through interrater judgments we created a set of reliable answers that would be related to numerical scores (1–5) summed over several questions for each dimension and, thus, create a suggestive profile for the optimal/dysfunctional areas in which a person's faith was functioning. We understood "functioning" to mean "agreed upon ways in which persons' coping skills were supportive/unsupportive of their mental health." We estimated that the interview would take approximately an hour to an hour and a half. We shared our efforts to standardize his model with Pruyser and invited him to embrace use of them in his training. Interestingly, he declined to support our efforts saying that he wanted his model to remain an unstructured tool.

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<sup>7</sup>It is obvious that this model is overtly "Christian." It makes no attempt to assess other religions or religion in general. This follows my conviction that religion and spirituality are distinctly different. Most persons for whom spirituality is effective have become "religious." Religion is the way in which spirituality becomes understood socially through agreed-upon concepts and rituals that assure repetition of spiritual experience and have an effect on attitudes and behavior. I suggest that it is the responsibility of psychologists in other religious traditions to design measures that reflect their major tenets.

My students and I were convinced that unstructured interviews did not meet the standards that were necessary for the confidence counselors needed to have in the tools they used to evaluate clients. Instead of backing down, we felt there was a need for even further standardization, the creation of an “inventory” that could be given in groups or completed by an individual and scored. Many Master’s projects and dissertations followed as attempts were made to perfect the reliability and validity of both the “Religious Status INTERVIEW” and the “Religious Status INVENTORY.” We even investigated translations in Chinese and Korean with a modicum of success. I summarized our work in *The Review of Religious Research* (Malony, 1988).

Among the numerous accounts of this work (which continued to the turn of the century) was one well-conceived study involving the Religious Status INTERVIEW, Bruce Atkinson’s study of religious maturity and psychological distress among older Christian women (Atkinson & Malony, 1994). He related higher-rated answers to the Interview schedule to lower depression, lower anxiety, and psychological distress on the MMPI.

The one “psychology of religion” experience that I value most is that I had a role in the founding of the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. In the late 1980s I had become involved with a number of European psychologists of religion by attending several of their meetings at Leuven, Belgium, Uppsala, Sweden, and Oslo, Norway. I had lectured in Korea, Mexico, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, and England. I had become active in the International Council of Psychologists and in Division 52 (International Psychology) of the American Psychological Association. My appreciation for psychologists around the world had grown significantly. Lawrence Brown of the University of Sydney had become a special friend of mine. We had published together. At the meeting of the International Congress of Psychology in Sydney toward the end of the 1980s Brown, Ralph Hood (University of Tennessee, Chattanooga), Allen Bergin (Brigham Young University), and I approached Lawrence Erlbaum with a proposal that we establish an international journal in the psychology of religion. He encouraged us and asked for a formal proposal. The rest is history, as the old saying states. The first edition of the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* came off the press in 1991 and publication has continued to the present day. Brown and I were the first editors. Hood served as book-review editor. We established an editorial board of psychologists from England, Egypt, Israel, Sweden, France, Belgium, Poland, Germany, Argentina, Finland, Canada, South Africa, USSR, Denmark, Australia, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and the United States. The present editor is Ray Paloutzian (Westmont College). I think it is recognized as a major contributor to the field.

I should say in closing that although I am a Christian and remain an ordained minister in good standing within my tradition, my study of psychology has provoked me to become a student of religion in general and an ardent activist for the freedom of religion. In the United States, where I have lived my life, the Christian faith is still dominant. Wherever a given religion is dominant, there is always the tendency that it will be suspicious and restrictive of other faiths. This is because religious beliefs are convictions about the nature of ultimate transempirical reality and, thus, have tended to be defended as absolute convictions that should be believed by everyone. This would assure social support for convictions that are essentially unseen and fragile.

I have taken an overt stand to protect new and different religions that diverge from what the majority might believe. This has led me to testify on their behalf in legal cases where their practices have been suspect. Of course, my defense has had to be cautious about those places where abuse or individual rights might be present. However, being different is not a crime and all religious convictions are presumptions, not scientifically proven facts. These presumptions are what I have called “functional theologies” that should work for all members of given religious traditions. A recent Pew Foundation survey of religion in America implies that an increasing number of persons are combining the features of several traditions. Although I may, as a Christian, personally bemoan this development, in the end the final question to be answered should be, “What works for you?” Those who criticize other peoples’ faiths should always begin with the question, “Why did my particular brand of religion not appeal to them?” rather than, “How could anybody in their right mind believe as do the \_\_\_\_\_ (whatever religious tradition is different from their own)?”

The Christian faith is evangelistic. For that I make no apology. I believe the Christian faith contains truth of essential value. Nevertheless, my philosophy of understanding and defending the rights and existence of other faiths is, in part, a recognition that there are *other faiths* whether I like it or not. Furthermore, my approach goes a step beyond this. I want to express Christian hospitality because beneath the faiths that any of us espouses lies a human being, and as a human being each of us is sacred. We are to be treated as creatures of infinite worth who need to be understood and appreciated. I am bold enough to hope that such an approach is a deep conviction of any of us who bear the title “psychologist of religion.”

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## Chapter 10

# The Story of a Late Rider

Pavel Říčan



The suggestion of Jacob Belzen that I contribute to a collection of autobiographies of outstanding psychologists of religion was a real surprise to me. This field has been, so to speak, the love of my late maturity only (I am really a late rider in this sense of the word!), and the amount of work I have managed to do here has been quite modest. And yet, on thinking it over, I accepted. Perhaps (as Jacob believes) my specific path towards as well as in the psychology of religion may be of particular interest to colleagues in the traditionally democratic countries where science, including the science of religion, has developed freely and without political or ideological restrictions. Perhaps my unique experience may reveal something substantial about my time, my country, and its spirituality or even about the psychology of religion in general. So, here is my story.

But what actually is the task of an author of an autobiography? I believe that his first and last question should be: what sense, what meaning does it all have? What was I actually after; what have been my basic, conscious and unconscious, strivings?

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P. Říčan (✉)

University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
e-mail: ricanpsych@seznam.cz

What understanding of self and others have I achieved? Let others evaluate my contribution to the psychology of religion. They will be more objective and just than I could ever be. I write my story, basically, as an attempt to understand it myself.

## **The Roots: My Church and My Family**

As a depth psychologist (a trained analyst with years of therapeutic experience) I naturally start in my childhood. This orientation of mine is responsible, too, for my focus on the inner dynamics of my life. I believe that, especially in the humanities, the work of a creative person may best be understood as an attempt to solve some most pressing inner conflict. Such an inner conflict, of course, comes to the fore only if we consider the context of significant social forces influencing the subject.

I was born, as was my great model, Carl G. Jung (Jaffé, 1982), whom I repeatedly recall in this narration, at a Protestant parsonage. My father, my grandfather, and some uncles (and now some of my cousins and their sons) have served as ministers or as prominent laymen in their congregations. Our church, called the Protestant<sup>1</sup> Church of the Czech Brethren, constitutes a small minority in this predominantly Catholic country, which may have contributed to the feeling of responsibility for the tradition of the supposedly “only true” faith among its members. This little church originated from the unification of two Protestant churches that had been tolerated since 1781 after a long period of total religious oppression by the monopoly of the Catholic Church. The unification was made possible by the fall of Austro-Hungary, ruled by the family of Hapsburg, which was strongly tied to the Catholic Church. The new little church was young and its clergy entertained great hopes connected with the newly established democracy in the equally young Czechoslovak Republic founded in 1918 on the debris of the old reactionary monarchy.

Our parsonage, where the family lived, with a great garden in which the church was also situated, lay on a little hill above the village. As a child, I felt dimly yet strongly that we were an island of truth and safety in a sea of the fallen, superstitious, spiritually decayed majority. This majority was alien and somehow mysteriously dangerous. On the basis of this experience, I understand the little Jung’s fear of Jesuits, as well as his lifelong respect for Catholicism, perhaps attributable to the influence of the archetype of the Great Mother represented by Rome.

My mother was born Catholic. She converted to Protestantism as a university student and later (only to arouse the indignation of her hardcore Catholic family) married my father, a zealous minister of the new Protestant church! Still, she did not break with her family and we were frequent guests at the villa built by her father, a small-town physician.

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<sup>1</sup>Actually called “Evangelická”, but the Czech language distinguishes between “evangelic”, which means a broad stream of Protestantism, and “evangelical”, which has the same meaning as in English.

This grandfather's house was situated opposite the local Catholic church. There I used to hear the hymns and see people going in and out. I also suspect that an aunt (or was it my grandmother?), occasionally took me to that church to compensate a little for my growing up in the "pernicious heresy." So I probably very early got to know the rich interior of a Catholic church (so different from the simplicity of the Reformed churches) and the smell of incense. Could not a bit of my mother's nostalgia for the lost paradise of her childhood have become a part of my lifelong religious sentiment?

## Childhood at the Parsonage

I was born the third of five children but I did not play very much with my siblings. Instead, I spent a lot of my time in solitary games and daydreaming. Unlike Jung who in his late memories told about his early strange, mostly dim introspective mystical experiences, I had my most spiritual childhood moments swinging in the top of the largest cherry tree of the parish garden, in elation or even in a euphoric mood. When I die, I shall not wish for a regular place in the cold family tomb. I want my ashes to be scattered on the grass where this tree used to grow 70 years ago. There is my real home, the center of my personal world, and the link between heaven and earth, mentioned repeatedly by Mircea Eliade in his theory of religion (e.g., Eliade, 1965).

Since early childhood, I was obliged regularly to attend Sunday school as well as the services for adults where my father preached week after week. Faith to me was a firm basis of life, unquestionable but rather dull. Obedience and guilt: they were a substantial part of my basic religious experience. And negotiating my little sins with my conscience (actually the Daddy-God of the little boy) was part of my daily routine. However, unlike Jung, I now highly appreciate my father's influence. In him I met a strange mix of rationality and pious awe towards Jehovah that made him shrink back whenever his powerful mind came up against a problem leading to doubts concerning the basic truths of Christianity. I may have inherited this controversy as an inspiration for my personal struggles, in faith as well as in science. In my life and work I have probably articulated the implicit controversies, doubts, and struggles of my less rebellious father. A leading Czech Catholic priest who read one of my books said to me lately that he repeatedly observed how I move at the margin between faithfulness to official Christian doctrine and deep disquieting doubts. Yes, as a personal matter my psychology of religion has been posited at this very edge where I still hope to find creative insights.

Back to my childhood: in the dark heavy years of World War II my parents' religious faith was closely tied to the hope that the future ahead of us would bring a radical betterment of the whole of life, the end of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the German army, a paradise of freedom and happiness. As children, we shared the quiet yet firm resistance to the Nazi regime as a basic evil of our lives. Parents never talked about politics for fear that children might betray their views in school.

The danger of informers was great and the penalties for every manifestation of political resistance were severe. On the knob of every receiver there had to be attached a little red card with a notice saying: "REMEMBER that listening to foreign radio is prohibited and is punishable by prison or even by death." Every day, my father finished his prayer at the end of our home worship with the words, "In Thy grace, break the power of the liars and brutes and give all the world justice and peace." After the war, when we learned the full truth about the Nazi atrocities, I was deeply moved and I felt I had to do everything I could not to allow a repetition of something like that. This resolution, of course, was childish (I was 12 at that time) but I think it became a part of my sense of duty, a sacred duty, that has remained a strong characteristic of my inner life. To side with good against evil has become the most sacred core of my religion. Bad luck for me: such a burden is not good for a child.

## **Growing Up Under the Shadow of Communism**

After the war, my father was appointed professor of church history at the theological faculty and we moved to Prague, the capital of the then Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic). I was an ordinary gymnasium (college) student, one of the more diligent ones, as family tradition required. I went to church obediently but the lukewarm (or just too sober?) piety of the congregation to which our family belonged meant little to me, although the moral values and ideals of my father were a commonplace to me at that time.

The communist coup in 1948 had a deep effect on me, although at first I did not realize its significance. My father believed (under the influence of his beloved teacher Josef Hromádka) that communism was coming as an historical necessity, as a new epoch of the development of mankind, and that all the injustice and severity brought by the new regime, even the cruelty of terror, were just the teething troubles of the new better world that was coming. Also, he believed that Christians should expiate for their failure to bring social justice, to take care of the poor. This monstrous delusion was not obvious from our perspective, for several reasons. First, the new government at first brought a real advancement to the lower classes as far as housing, health care, and so on were concerned. Second, communist censorship and propaganda were very efficient. Third, the nation was grateful to Communist Russia for the liberation from Nazi Germany. And fourth, the ideas of socialism, traditionally strong in the country, were alive among the intelligentsia, including some of the best writers, artists, and teachers. (Even such a master of critical insight as Milan Kundera, as a young man wrote a long poem glorifying a communist idol, Julius Fučík.) Also, the ideology proclaimed by the regime exalted youth as a bearer of progress and predicted liberation from "obsolete" moral norms, which sounded like a promise to me, an adolescent feeling fettered by the enormously strict moral rules of my church, and especially of my family.

Under these circumstances, I struggled with the ordinary personal problems of adolescence, greatly confused politically and ideologically as well as spiritually, and unaware of how much I was losing. I found no real teacher or spiritual leader,

and no such person found me. Erik Erikson (1968) would probably describe me as an adolescent in a moratorium, temporarily unable to go ahead in his development.

## A Strange Student of Theology

At the age of 18, I had to choose what to do after graduation from gymnasium. I dimly felt that I would like to study languages or biology, perhaps medicine. To my great surprise I suddenly came to feel a pressing vocation (which I believed to be the voice of God) to study theology and to become a minister! Although I was a member of a group of young Christians at that time and regularly went to their meetings, I did not like the idea at all. I was shy, had very limited ability to work with people, was incompetent as far as music was concerned, and my interest in religious activity was rather lukewarm. Nevertheless, I felt that it was absolutely necessary to obey. So I went to that faculty, in spite of the frantic antireligious propaganda of the regime and very poor practical prospects of a career. Later, however, I started "receiving" other inner commands demanding absolute obedience that I was not able to carry out. So I felt permanently guilty, yet at the same time I felt I had a special privilege of direct contact with God, a unique spiritual experience. My professors, as well as the ministers to whom I listened and with whom I was in touch at that time, spoke very little about experiences of this kind, so I felt somehow superior to them and, on the other hand, also lonely because I was not able to share my feelings and ideas with anybody. When asked whether he believed in God, Jung once said, "I do not believe, I know!" At a primitive, childish level, I had the same gnostic certitude. I did not understand that I was playing a strange neurotic inner game with myself. It took me years to overcome the tyrant inside, and to accept that I am an ordinary man, not somebody specially chosen.

Although I suffered severely (probably at the edge of a psychotic breakdown) I was able to observe and analyze my inner experience rationally, thanks to the training in introspection and to the equipment with relevant concepts not unusual in ministers' children.

I believe that my fundamental psychological setup developed during these lonely years. I wondered why my teachers apparently knew so little about things so obviously important to the life of faith, theoretically as well as practically. Now I know: the reason was that the school where I studied was dominated by the dialectic theology of Karl Barth. (At the time of my studies perhaps this trend was already degenerating into a rigid version of the old Protestant orthodoxy.) Whereas the liberal theology of the nineteenth century actually generated the psychology of religion, Barth emphatically warned that psychology is useless and even dangerous to theology and, of course, to Christian spirituality.

During my studies I was naturally attracted by revivalist movements with their emphasis on inner experience. I got in touch with some Pentecostals in Silesia whom I found fascinating but also threatening to my inner balance, so I did not dare to develop this contact. The boom of the Charismatic movement in Prague, which would have been more acceptable to me, came only much later.

## What Else? Psychology of Course!

As an obedient son and a loyal church member I completed my studies of theology. To the surprise of my father, my teachers, and my colleagues (last, but not least, of my girlfriend), I refused to accept a position in the clergy and – dropped out. It was probably a belated move of my desperate adolescent struggle for personal identity in the effort to break the childish emotional dependence on my parents. “Coming out” as an atheist was a big and traumatic moral problem to me. The grievousness of this problem was multiplied by the fact of the external oppression of churches. “You are a cowardly defector!” Such an accusation and self-accusation was all too obvious. The fact that I was a very ambitious young man made my guilt feelings even worse.

I was able to break with my family and with the church community; I could also leave off my private prayers but, of course, my values, ideals, attitudes, and emotions remained mostly unchanged. So I had some kind of a personal “religion after religion” or “nonreligious spirituality.” This concerned my political orientation (resistance to political and ideological pressure towards conformity in the interests of a professional career) as well as my professional ethos and sense of responsibility.

After a year spent as an educator of apprentices in a factory house (a painful but enormously useful experience for a boy who had been used to living in a glass house!), I managed to get clerical work in the laboratory of the newly founded Institute of Psychology of Charles University in Prague. I hoped that in science I would find the meaning of life that I could not find in religion. The director recognized me as a promising candidate for study in this field and helped me to filter through to the faculty, first as an “irregular,” later a regular external student. I was also allowed to work independently on small research projects in the laboratory of the Institute. It was at a time when psychology was already accepted by the leaders of the Communist Party, but with great caution: it was and remained suspect of “ideological contamination.” Therefore, we were obliged to go in the footsteps of the “Soviet Marxist psychologists,” preferably following the lines of Pavlovian psychology (“the physiology of the highest nervous activity,” as it was called), and to avoid anything that might be criticized as a “bourgeois pseudoscience.” My first project involved the analysis of finger movements in typing, another the recognition of various visual patterns presented tachystoscopically.

For me, this was another moratorium I badly needed: the subject of study had little to do with anything related to the humanities, that is, to the field where I experienced my psychospiritual crisis. In the objectivity of science, I hoped to find a refuge at a time of confusing inner turmoil. Everything was purely objective, amenable to statistical analysis of data. Not for long! After some time, when the director felt that a political and ideological thaw was coming (in the early 1960s), he encouraged me to do research on ability testing, later also on questionnaires, and other methods of personality research. Now I was already a step closer to the human soul.

When I was 31, the director of our institute, to whom I owe the introduction to critical thinking in psychology, suddenly died. At this moment, my craving to go

deeper was strong enough to drive me to clinical psychology. I switched to a department of psychiatry with which I already had been in touch on the basis of a small research project. This department was famous for group psychotherapy, then an entirely new field in Czech psychiatry. Here I learned, among other methods, psychodrama. The stay at this department was extremely instructive and enriching. Unfortunately, the head of the department, a highly competent man, was too dominant and authoritative for me to accept him as a leader and teacher of clinical work. After less than a year, I left him and accepted a position in a small laboratory of clinical research at the university.

During my clinical intermezzo, I also acquired (marginal, yet important) experience with LSD, then considered a promising medical drug and an honorable method of research in depth psychology. A young Czech physician Stanislav Grof (2004), up to that time untouched by philosophy or religion, after a single application of the drug immediately decided to devote his whole professional career to research on the influence of hallucinogenic agents on the human psyche. A little later, after he emigrated from Czechoslovakia to the United States, he became one of the founders of transpersonal psychology. His books, now rather influential in the Czech Republic, strongly suggest that he became a leader of a spiritual movement of a certain kind, perhaps classifiable as a lukewarm humanistic religion. Interestingly, the group of his followers applying his method of holotropic breathing (a surrogate for the prohibited LSD) in our country is strongly reminiscent of a sect or cult. What with my religious life before taking LSD, it was not such an overwhelming and decisive experience for me as it was for Grof but I was nevertheless strongly encouraged to self-exploration in the spirit of depth psychology.

## **America: A Dream and a Disappointment**

Now came my great, long dreamed-of chance: America! I was promised the position of a research assistant in the Laboratory for Personality and Group Analysis, and I managed to obtain (it was in the year 1966, during a real political thaw in our country, and my ideological sins became temporarily irrelevant) permission to accept that position for a year. I had been fascinated by the method of factor analysis, of which Raymond B. Cattell, my new temporary boss, was a recognized world number one. I admired this man very much. I hoped to learn from him how to excel in the field and how to penetrate some anticipated secrets of the human personality. I was disappointed again. The great man was past his noontide, the work in the laboratory had become routine and much of the research was done to develop diagnostic methods ensuring the commercial success of the company run by the practical-minded Mrs. Cattell. Instead of focusing and going in depth into a narrow field, Professor Cattell kept trying his beloved method in a broad range of fields, including factors of motivation of laboratory rats!

In the spiritual desert I experienced during my American year, I found an oasis: the work of Erik Homburger Erikson. In his theory of the eight ages of man

(which I recognized much later as a myth in the best Jungian sense of the word) I found a bridge between the science of psychology and religion, or spirituality. I was not the only one: this bridge has served generations of American college students to whom his *Childhood and Society* was (and perhaps still is) recommended as a most eye-opening book.

After I returned from America, I was offered a highly prestigious position in the newly founded Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Sciences (the political and ideological thaw continued). Here I proceeded with research on personality, greatly indebted to Cattell. My book *Psychology of Personality* (1971, 6th edition 2010), however, already reflected the ideas of humanistic psychology also, particularly those of Erikson. The formulations had to be cautious and religion was only mentioned in passing, because in 1971 censorship was back again, but some perceptive readers asked: hasn't this book been written by a minister?

## **The Lucky Disaster**

The year 1971 (I was 38) brought another turning point in my career. This time, it was not my choice. Political checkups, started by the “normalized” Communist party in 1969 at the highest echelons of the system, worked their way down to the ordinary scientific workers of our academy, including, of course, also the nonparty members. I was found politically unacceptable and was fired. This was a real disaster to a researcher with the highest ambitions. And yet, nothing better could have happened to me! Thanks to good friends (incidentally: zealous members of the church I had left years before) I found refuge in the health service. Here the political pressure was not as strong as in the Academy of Sciences and I was even allowed to teach medical doctors and clinical psychologists (although at the university and in the leading professional journals my name was on the blacklist).

Yes, it was good luck, although it took me a long time to realize it. From the best teachers available in the field of clinical psychology I now had the chance to learn how to use diagnostic methods creatively, how to work with a broad range of patients, and how to advise people in various crises.

## **My Personal “Religion After Religion”**

During the 1970s of the last century, although busy in clinical psychology, I still stuck to the idea that my main professional achievement should be in the theory of personality. Here I was particularly attracted by the fashionable, although protean, concept of the self. However, instead of cautiously analyzing the role of this concept in general social awareness and in science understood as a social phenomenon (as I would proceed today), I was trying “to take the fortress by storm,” to capture the true center, or core of personality, actually the soul. I dreamt of a unique synthetic



theoretical work done from the armchair. Unconsciously, I hoped to discover some basic truth of psychology, to satisfy my personal need of something certain and safe, of the proverbial “firm point in the universe.” I believe that such a motive, hidden behind “purely scientific efforts,” is not uncommon in psychology, or perhaps also in other sciences.

I studied hard and I learned a lot but this pet dream of mine remained fruitless, partly because there was no adequate forum where I could have discussed my ideas. No domestic journal would have printed Říčan, even if I wrote “Marxistically,” that is, if I cited – no matter if only formally – Soviet psychologists considered ideologically unobjectionable. And, of course, there was no chance that I would obtain permission to send such stuff to be published abroad; sending a paper abroad without the permission of the authorities would be dangerous to a professional career.

My search for a surrogate for religion in psychological theory had a counterpart in my training in psychotherapy. Relatively late, at the age of 40, I started my training in group psychotherapy. This activity was considered ideologically suspect by the Communist watchmen. And really, the understanding of an individual as a unique human being, as an end in itself, common in the Czech psychotherapeutic training communities, stood in sharp contrast to the (pseudo-)Marxist view of the individual as a means in the process of building a better future, or as the proverbial wheel in the supermachine of society. Also, the depth-psychological orientation, which was influential among clinical psychologists, was only half tolerated by the official establishment in psychology and psychiatry. And, on top of this, a number of active Christians were among the leading figures of the Czech psychotherapeutic movement. All this contributed to our feeling that we were bearers of values and ideals most needed for a moral and spiritual renewal of a society degenerated under the pressure of the communist evil.

The small groups in which we did our training provided us with an experience of intimate interpersonal relationships similar to relationships in the small religious communities typical of revivalist movements. My nostalgia for the human closeness combined with spiritual mutuality in small religious groups made me experience the training with great personal intensity. I still believe that interpersonal intimacy, not just of an erotic kind, may attain the intensity of an ecstatic spiritual experience; the dominant aspect of such an intimacy may be gratitude, admiration, self-sacrificing love for a suffering human being, perhaps even terror similar to the terror of a god torturing his victim with the utmost cruelty (Říčan, 2002). I think these ideas developed Maslow’s well-known concept of peak experiences (Maslow, 1976).

Later, when I started my training in psychoanalysis, I met a similar spirit and ethos. Psychotherapy was considered a noble idealistic undertaking, an effort to help people by discovering the truth and meaning of their individual lives while bringing little social recognition or personal benefit to the psychotherapist. And really, unlike in the free countries where psychotherapy meant rather a safe remunerative job, there were many honest idealists among us who practiced psychotherapy as a real vocation. So here I found an extremely interesting, spiritually stimulating, and also cohesive community, reminiscent of religious groups I had left many years before. Nevertheless, I still missed my spiritual home, and at the age of

56 I finally returned to my “church of origin” and became an active member of one of its congregations. The return was not without pain but perhaps my renovated position liberated me from taking science too seriously, instead regarding it as a tool, not as an idol or an aim in itself.

Inspired by the work of Erik Erikson, I prepared a book on life-span development called *The Way Through Life* (Říčan, 2004a) which had to lie at the publisher until Autumn 1989 waiting for the collapse of communism to be published. It is not a book on the psychology of religion or spirituality as such but the ideas of personal identity, psychospiritual crisis, and vital faith (in a broad sense of the word) are at the heart of it. It has been my most successful book, still read and sold, although now, of course, urgently requiring a revision to make its spiritual message more explicit.

## All Doors Open: Better Late Than Never

The 1990s brought dramatic changes in the lives of many of us here in the Czech (up to 1993 Czechoslovak) republic. I was no longer a *persona non grata*. There were no obstacles for me to advance academically (as associate professor, later full professor). I was elected the first postcommunist era president of the Czechoslovak Psychological Society. I even had the chance to return to the Psychological Institute of the Academy of Sciences after almost 20 years of “exile,” and as its director! I was not very successful in this function; a good boss should become one in his thirties at the latest. But after my term was over I very much enjoyed the possibility to do research full-time, and with adequate funding. I studied human aggression, especially among children. When I reached the age of 60, I felt I might discontinue my activity in empirical research and I asked for a grant for a theoretical project called “satisfaction from the suffering of another human being.” The best part of the results was a study on the religious context of causing suffering to a human being (Říčan, 2002). That was actually my first work classifiable as psychology of religion.

Meanwhile, I was trying to do something for my church by helping with the training of future ministers at the faculty where I had studied decades before. So I told my students about the contributions of Erikson, Jung, Freud, and other thinkers to the study of religion. I also worked on their communicative skills and I even managed to work with a quasi-therapeutic group of those who were interested in this type of experience. At the same time, I wrote about the problems of religious people as patients in clinical practice, about psychological aspects of Charismatic groups, I psychologically examined future ministers to warn the church authorities against possible problems with them in their ministries, and I also did this with new chaplains in the Czech army.

The acceptance I met with at the theological faculty was less warm than I had hoped. I was tolerated as a part-time “volunteer” for several years but students received no credits for their work with me and, of course, I got no official recognition (such as money) for my efforts. The Barthian influence was still strong and

psychology was regarded with suspicion, especially when it became clear that I found it important to study and teach the genuine *psychology of religion* as an independent authentic science, not just *religious psychology* as a discipline auxiliary to theology or the work of the church. There are, however, two non-Catholic theological faculties at Charles University in Prague, and the other one (more liberal) asked me to teach regular courses on the psychology of religion to their students of religion who did not intend to become ministers. This part-time job brought me new stimuli and young collaborators so that I also returned, better late than never, to empirical research in the Academy of Sciences, now oriented towards the psychology of religion and spirituality. My monograph *The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (2nd edition, 2007), based mainly upon my teaching and research experience has been recognized as the standard Czech work in the field.

## **The Nineties in the Czech Republic: A Carnival Religious Landscape**

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the formerly Communist countries experienced a boom in various religious movements. Evangelists and missionaries were coming from the East and West, even from the North and South. After 40 years of atheistic oppression and vacuum in the public space, many people were extremely sensitive and open to (“unvaccinated” against!) various sorts of religious propaganda, at various levels of cultivation and authenticity. Christian revivalists and Pentecostals, worshippers of Krishna, Buddhists, and adherents of Yoga, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and many other sects and cults now preached their messages openly and they attracted numerous converts.

As a researcher and as a teacher of the psychology of religion I found this eruption of religious and spiritual phenomena extremely interesting and instructive to my students. New religious groups were mostly composed of young people, often deeply involved in their religious life and, inspired by this, radical in their social behavior. Contact with them was really fascinating.

Some of the converts, of course, were soon disappointed or felt abused by their gurus in a specific way and were trying to escape from their new commitments. Often they found it extremely difficult to get rid of the ties to the leaders as well as to the communities they had chosen and with which they identified. Exit counseling offered opportunities to observe dramatic inner struggles as well as interpersonal conflicts of the highest intensity. I was lucky to have an opportunity to cooperate with Professor Vojtisek, a leading specialist in this area, who knew the religious landscape of the country in depth and in detail. We published some papers together (Říčan & Vojtisek, 1999a, b). Later, Professor Vojtisek founded *Dingir*, a semipopular journal specializing in the religious landscape of the Czech Republic to which I still occasionally contribute. This journal now aspires to recognition by the scientific community and has raised its demands on authors accordingly.

At the Hussite Theological Faculty I taught the theory of the psychology of religion but, at the same time, I instructed students to observe what happens in various religious communities, to describe it psychologically, and to discuss their observations in a group. During the first semester of my course, they were required to contact a Christian or, if they were Jews, a Jewish community, and during the second semester, a culturally distant group. In other seminars, we practiced some simple methods of meditation and students had a chance to discuss their experience with them in a group. This kind of work proved stimulating to the teacher as well as the students. Although I am retiring now, I shall remain in contact with my successor as a consultant and I enjoy seeing how the work I started is developing.

## A Nonreligious Spirituality?

The Czech Republic is a uniquely secularized country, even in the context of a Europe where only a small minority of the population still supports churches. In a little ironical joke combined with a small sigh we sometimes call our country “the Godless Czech basin” (the main part of the country is a basin geographically).

At the beginning of the last century, Jung had already interpreted the obvious crisis of European Christianity, not as a consequence of a simple loss of spirituality or of interest in religion but as a *transforming crisis* that will result in something qualitatively new. The human soul, he used to say, is genuinely religious and the loss of old forms provides a unique chance for Europe to be enriched by a sort of eruption from the depths of the collective unconscious. The catastrophes of Nazism and Communism, he believed, were basically of a religious nature. But the real positive revival of religion was still ahead!

Jung did not live long enough to witness the contemporary religious landscape with the continuing decline of most of the Christian churches (and their dramatic growth in some parts of the world), a statistically marginal (although perhaps important) growth of Buddhism and other Eastern religions, and a broad stream of religion descended into an eclectic mix of superstition, at a cultural level barely more than the mud of an indifferent agnosticism and atheistic hostility towards any organized religion. To be personal again: I saw the country church where my father had served faithfully for 11 years deserted, without any visible hope of renewal.

Are we to look for the first manifestations of an underground lost river of spirituality with the hope that it will change into a magnificent spring of a new unheard-of stream of renaissance of religion and, through it, of the whole culture, as Jung suggested?

When we observe, from the European perspective, mainstream religious life in America, we cannot resist an impression that religion there is often a commonplace, a matter of routine, of a well-established technology and social engineering and mass manipulation. Where are the doubts, the inseparable shadow of faith, where is the painful yet omnipresent mystery of evil? Sometimes I feel (and I am not the only one with this feeling) that a stubborn Nietzschean atheist or an agnostic who says he

cannot believe is humanly closer to me than a self-secure fundamentalist or a happy-go-lucky easy-going churchgoer. At such moments, I sense a unique hope in this honest quest of us Europeans.

From these personal reflections, it may be easy to understand my interest in discussions about the concept of spirituality, particularly in the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* at the end of the 1990s. Piedmont's Spiritual Transcendence Scale (Piedmont, 1999) caught my attention and inspired my thinking as well as my empirical research (Říčan, 2003). In an extensive article, "Spirituality – The Story of a Concept in the Psychology of Religion," published in the *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* (2004b) I analyzed the entry of the concept into and its development in psychology as well as in general usage. Here I traced the trajectory of the concept from the battle-cry of American hippies of the golden 1960s, inspired by some of the humanistic psychologists, "I am not religious but I am spiritual," up to the contemporary youth of the Czech Republic saying, "Spirituality yes, religion no!" My solution of the problem "spirituality versus religion" was very close to that of Ken Pargament (e.g., 1999; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). According to him, spirituality may best be defined as the experiential core of religion. I have been puzzled by the fact that so many highly competent students of religion refuse to accept this simple ingenious solution, which retains the traditional meaning of the term "religion." At present, I am trying to show that the concept of spirituality and the double word "spirituality and religion," which has become strangely frequent, is a social construction with a specific function that needs to be assessed critically.

## **Individual Differences and Their Measurement as My Dominant Theme**

As a psychologist who had spent most of his professional life working in the theory, measurement, and practical assessment of individual differences I soon recognized my challenge in the field of the psychology of religion: the measurement of spirituality. If the approach via individual differences proved useful with respect to human abilities as well as to dimensions of personality, it should be given its chance also with respect to spirituality. In the first place, it leads from mere theorizing to operationalization of concepts.

Our special interest has been, as suggested above, the questionable concept of nonreligious spirituality. We decided to define general spirituality, which means spirituality that can appear or exist independent of the particular religious confession the subject declares or even of the condition whether the subject confesses *any religion* or she or he is an agnostic or atheist. More specifically, the atheist should have the chance to obtain the maximum score on a test of this general spirituality.

Critical examination of existing instruments having the word "spirituality" in their title led us to the Spiritual Transcendence Scale of Ralph Piedmont. Piedmont, formerly one of the great ones around the Big Five, did an excellent job when he

constructed a questionnaire of spirituality to which even subjects professing no religion could answer meaningfully. (In its final version, interestingly, he included an item enquiring about faith in God, perhaps under the influence of his affiliation to Loyola College?) Together with a young colleague, we translated Piedmont and verified the factorial structure of his questionnaire on Czech students (Říčan, Lukavsky, Janosova, & Stochl, 2010).

Before Piedmont, David Elkins (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988) had published an outline of a questionnaire of general spirituality. His biography is slightly reminiscent of my own. He studied theology and then he started to work as a minister. However, his fundamentalist congregation fired him from this position and even excluded him as a member. In a personal crisis, he found a Jungian therapist and became a therapist himself. His outline contains all essential Christian humanistic values, with love as the most important one.

We constructed, on similar lines to Piedmont (Elkins never published his questionnaire), the Prague Spirituality Questionnaire, PSQ (Říčan & Janosova, 2005), one more adequate to our culture. It was factor analyzed and validated and we appreciated very much that a study based upon it was published as an article opening the 2010 volume of the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*.<sup>2</sup>

A detail from our work on the PSQ may be of interest as symptomatic of the standpoint of my autobiography. It concerns morality as an aspect of spirituality. Our initial item-pool was rather extensive and we relied on exploratory factor analysis to establish subdimensions of spirituality. With me as the main author of the items, it is not surprising that one of the factors invited interpretation as *Moral Involvement* (a sample item: *Sometimes I dread to think how badly I could mess up my life*). To our disappointment, we found that this factor correlated with neuroticism! So we carefully searched individual correlations within the item-pool and were able rationally to construct another moral scale with an acceptable alpha, interpretable as *ethical enthusiasm* (a sample item: *Sometimes I feel the craving to devote my entire life to the fight of good against evil*). And we modified the interpretation of the other factor to *conscientious solicitude*.

As an illustrative example of another psychometric project (still unfinished but already published in a preliminary form) the test called “Test of Spiritual Sensitiveness” (Říčan, Janosova, & Tyl, 2007) may be mentioned. The items of this test are pictures projected on the screen and subjects are asked to choose from a given list those emotions that each particular picture aroused in them. Exploratory factor analysis yielded three factors tentatively interpretable as (1) *Dionysian enthusiasm* (markers: enthusiasm, wonder, sadness/reversed), (2) *Christian hopefulness* (markers: hope, love, longing), (3) *Sense of holiness* (markers: awe, strength/reversed, humility). A typical picture of this test is given as Fig. 10.1. According to the data obtained from the Czech students, it especially evokes the feeling of gratitude.

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<sup>2</sup> See Říčan and Janosova (2010). The reviewers were rather skeptical towards us newcomers and their comments actually suggested that the whole job should be done again. Nevertheless, Ray Paloutzian as editor-in-chief was more understanding and accepted a revised version. He even started asking us for reviews of new manuscripts, so now we feel really “in”!

**Fig. 10.1** A stimulus from the Test of Spiritual Sensitiveness



I cannot claim that I founded a Czech school of the psychology of religion! Yet, my work is being cited quite frequently and interest in the questionnaire is also not negligible. Future years will show...

## **A Look Back**

We live in a world that does not understand itself. The great ideas of Galileo Galilei, Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and their followers remain challenges unmet by religious or other thinkers trying to provide contemporary man with a system of thought giving him a sense of meaning and a workable guide to social action. Many of the teachings of churches seem to be answers to questions we neither understand nor even know any more. The old images, symbols, and stories grow pale and lose their relevance. Something substantial has been lost, and we miss it sorely. Such has been my experience since childhood, even if I only gradually learned to articulate it, with the help of the thinkers whose books I have read, personal friends I have met, and, last but not least, the patients who entrusted me with their psychospiritual troubles.

I believe that throughout my whole life, in all its developmental stages and breaks, its twists and turns, the proverbial scarlet thread may be traced: in the middle

or under all that ordinariness and everydayness, under the strivings for success and happiness, my course was determined by a basic care: to understand this great loss and to do something about it. It is probably the burden of every modern man but I was “privileged” to carry more of it than most people.

Already in the boredom of the minister’s child overfed with the routine of religious instruction I dare to see a form of the rejection of the inauthentic surrogate for the dreamed-of truth and a vital faith, on which one could base one’s trust and basic orientation in the world. My quiet adolescent resistance to obligatory religious instruction, the clash with the experience of an absolute personal command and the years needed to overcome it, the choice of psychology as a field of study and profession, all that I now understand as a groping quest for something to replace what religion had promised but failed to provide.

In psychology, I started as far as possible from spirituality (for reasons I have tried to identify above) but step by step I proceeded from the periphery to what I gradually recognized as the center of the area: here topics such as highest value or striving, true self, conscience, peak experience, existential encounter, meaning of life, and so on mutually intermingle and actually call for integration into the topic that completes them while transcending them: spirituality. So when I finally entered the psychology of religion proper I only had to make explicit what had been implicitly prepared during my whole personal and professional life.

Above I mentioned the Jungian idea of the revival or even rebirth of religion in some new, unheard-of form. This is only one version of the idea of the great waiting-for or quest for something that the world or at least our sick Europe needs more than anything else. As a child and as a young man, I lived my doubts and gropings as a search for personal orientation, which I felt I must ground entirely individually. Gradually, I came to understand my individual quest as a part, as an atom of a great movement of millions of people in and outside organized religions. I believe that even the core of the psychology of religion, and especially of the psychology of spirituality, may be understood as a part of this great quest. It is a science not only of that which exists, but of that which is coming. I know that this is a heresy from the standpoint of religion as well as from the standpoint of science but I nevertheless gladly subscribe to it.

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# Chapter 11

## An Accidental Psychologist of Religion

Ana-María Rizzuto



### The Unexpected

I was in my late teens and was studying to become a teacher in Córdoba, Argentina. On Sundays we went with a group of classmates to a neighboring Catholic Church to teach the catechism to children preparing to receive first communion. That particular Sunday, the subject of the conversation was heaven and going to heaven. A young girl gave clear indications that she did not care to go to heaven. There was pain in her voice, sadness in her face, and conviction in her stance. I decided to let the matter drop and after class to take time to talk to her in private. Our conversation led to the disclosure that she knew that her mother was a prostitute and that she also knew that prostitutes don't go to heaven. Her choice had been made: she would go in the afterlife wherever her mother would go. I reflected about that painful moment

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A.-M. Rizzuto (✉)  
PINE Psychoanalytic Center, Massachusetts, USA  
e-mail: arizzuto@massmed.org

with the young child: it was clear that she was choosing her mother over God. I was not only deeply moved, but intellectually challenged by a choice for which neither theologians nor catechism writers or my teachers had prepared me. The moments of our painful conversation remained engraved in my mind as a religious and a theoretical question.

After receiving my teacher's degree, I decided to go to medical school. In medical school I found three classmates with similar interests: we all wanted to practice an "anthropological medicine," one that went beyond the symptoms in order to understand the person who is ill. We formed a study group and found that the German medical literature had much to offer for our purposes. We read the Spanish translation of the works of Theodore Lipps (1851–1914), in particular his writings on empathy. We studied, also in Spanish, the books of German psychiatrist Viktor Emil von Gebattel (1883–1974), his views on the doctor–patient relationship and his warning against the dehumanization of medicine. We studied the works of Viktor von Weizsäcker (1886–1957), a professor of neurology at the University of Heidelberg. He theorized about the human dimension of medical illnesses, frequently focusing on psychosomatic conditions. He insisted on locating concrete physical illness in the frame of the patient's life circumstances at the moment in which the individual had become sick. His book *Der Gestaltkreis* dealt with his theoretical approach to human pathology. His best contribution was the clinical live interviews he conducted at the patients' bedsides in the hospital. His brilliant intuition led him to connect the patient's life circumstances to his pathology. After all that reading and discussing, we felt ready to look at our patients not as individuals caught by unsuspected diseases, but as people immersed in the complex web of their external and internal realities. We understood that physical and psychical illnesses always appear embedded in a life that is made up of networks of personal and cultural meanings. In brief: illness is part of that meaning.

I had also undertaken studying philosophy and developmental psychology both at the university and on my own. After graduation from medical school in 1959, I worked as an assistant to the head of hematology at the Córdoba Hospital, in Córdoba, Argentina, and started a private practice. Some years later, when the newly created Catholic University started a school of education and psychology, I was asked to teach child and adolescent development. I accepted the appointment as a temporary commitment because I had already planned to study psychoanalysis and did not want to commit my time to a field that was not going to be my own.

## **Another Unexpected Event**

In October of 1963 I received a call from the rector of the Seminario Mayor Metropolitano Nuestra Señora de Loreto, the oldest Catholic Seminary in Argentina. My name was suggested to him by a senior colleague at the Catholic University. The rector wanted me to teach a new subject to the advanced students: "the psychological foundations of belief and pastoral care." At the end of our conversation the little

girl from the catechism class had returned to my mind and posed again the critical question: do you choose your God or your mother? The rector offered me complete freedom to create a course to help future priests to understand the believers' struggles with their God and their faith.

I was flattered and frightened by the proposal. I knew next to nothing about the subject. No one had taught it before. I asked for some time to reflect about whether I could teach it. My literature search offered little: a few scattered studies about religion, but nothing systematic dealing with either the development of faith or the psychic foundations of pastoral care. I decided to consult the great masters: Freud offered significant insights into the correlation between a person's relationship with parents, in love and in conflict, and the relationship with God. Jung's notion of symbols, archetypes, and particularly the archetype of the self appeared too generic to allow me to understand the subtle and exquisitely personal issues involved in the subjective experience of believers. Adler, moving away from Freud, saw God not as a being the believer wrestles with but as a value. In the United States A. Gesell had included the study of the child's conception of God and some religious issues in his systematic study of child development. His contributions were descriptive, however, and offered no understanding of the *process* that led the child to particular ways of conceiving the divinity.

Authors interested in development such as C. Bühler, Spranger, and Gruber in the German-speaking world addressed issues of religion but did not attend to the subjective experience of the child in relation to God or beliefs. The same limitations applied to Bovet, Bebesse, Mandouse, and Piaget. All of them offered descriptions of children's comments about God and studies of questionnaires and adolescents' writings, but none of their contributions offered an understanding of the process of belief. Neither William James nor Allport, the great North American classic writers on religion, had much to say that could be used for a systematic study of the process of how belief develops. Finally, the scientific study of religion offered me a mass of statistics, contradictory definitions, and innumerable charts that led me nowhere in facing my task of teaching the "psychological foundations of belief." The literature on pastoral care offered limited help for my enterprise.

After much pondering, I decided that only courage and boldness could help me to teach the course. Here is what I thought I could do: convert the course into an educational research experiment. I would ask the seminarians who were all teaching children on Sunday to take notes of their conversations with the children, to bring as much information as they could gather about the child's age and family circumstances and to use that material as an ad hoc case study. The idea was to examine from the developmental and dynamic point of view what the child was saying and asking in the catechism class. The goal was to help us, teacher and seminarians, to understand the child not only as a believer, but also as a person at a particular developmental moment. I wanted to see if we could find some normative developmental patterns in the children's exchanges with the seminarians. I also wanted to ascertain if we could unveil some of the dynamic processes present in their experiences.

We listened to many children and their interests and predicaments as manifested in their conversations at the catechism class. I do not know if the seminarians learned

much from such exercises. I do know that the many questions that emerged from our examinations of the children's comments and stories soon had me hooked. I had a feeling of awe: I was seeing a new panorama, a new unexplored field of human experience waiting to be discovered and studied. I promised myself to undertake the study in depth of "the psychological foundations of belief."

The course was completed in the Argentine spring of 1964. In the autumn, I left the country of my birth and emigrated to the United States. After a year in New York working in a rotating internship to fulfill the requirements for revalidating my medical license and board certification, I moved to Boston because I wanted to live in a city in which academy played a more dominant role. I was accepted as a psychiatric resident at Boston State Hospital, an institution that no longer exists. The first thing I did was to buy a tape recorder. In those days it was a heavy Grundig machine with long reels of tape waiting to register what I wanted to learn from the subjects of my research. I explained to the superintendent of the hospital who had hired me that I planned to use my free time to do my strange research. He had no objection and offered to provide me with a supervisor for the research plan. The first supervisor, a well-known psychologist, was horrified by my research topic, claimed he had no idea about how to carry out such an investigation and abandoned me to my own resources. When I informed the superintendent about the desertion of the research supervisor, he offered me the help of another person who was a well-known and respected researcher in another field. We met and had a pleasant time talking together about his research and my budding plans. At the end of the conversation he said that he could not be of any help to me because in spite of being a master of the methods in his field of research, he would not know even how to start thinking about my proposed area of research. So, he wished me well, and I was, once more, left to my own devices. It was now clear that I was on my own, that I had to create my own methods and techniques, and do what I could to research my subject systematically.

I decided that I should start from what I knew: child development and Freud's ideas about the dynamic connection between the relationship to the father and the Deity. I took the liberty of enlarging Freud's idea to include both parents because it was incongruous from the development point of view to consider only the influence of the father in the formation of the psychical conception of the Deity. Now, I had to create a method of research and find my subjects.

## **Creating Goals, Inventing Methods**

As a lone researcher of a subject that I considered very significant, I felt a moral and intellectual obligation to make my goals as clear as possible. My review of the literature had shown me that a researcher can carry out a complex project full of charts and statistics that in the end is completely irrelevant, a big to-do about nothing. My first resolution was to make my study as simple and as comprehensive as possible. My second resolution was that the quality of my method should make it, as far as it is possible, unimpeachable as a technique. My third resolution was to take all the

time I needed to do it well: after all, I was my own boss and nobody cared whether I was researching or not. It was my private folly to carry it out. Finally, I decided that I would not bias my learning by imposing preformulated theories of any type upon the material: I would gather the data and let them be until the moment I was ready to look at them and try to let them speak for themselves when common patterns, repeated events, similar ways of functioning, and so on appeared in the comparison of cases.

To make it simple I decided to use the same type of interviews, projective techniques, and questionnaires in all the people selected for my study. To make it comprehensive, that is, to leave no one out for purposes of comparison, I chose to select five normal individuals, members of the staff who agreed to work with me: a physician, a nurse, an art therapist, a social worker, and a student minister assigned to our ward; two were males and three were females. These people were to be compared with patients representing the 20 major diagnoses of the patients hospitalized in different units, ranging from psychoses to character disorders.

When the selection of the sample for the research had been settled, I had to create the methodology. In my ignorance, I explored some techniques of research to access the inner world of the individual, which was the goal of my entire project. I had some limited experience with the drawing of the family as a projective technique and I learned about types of questionnaires that could give some access to private perception, feelings, and convictions. I read about techniques of interviewing and the type of interview that could best help my goals. The final decision led me to use a structured interview covering the history of the person and including religious experiences. When the interview was finished I would ask the individual to draw a picture of his or her family and then respond to one questionnaire about the family and another about God in order to see the correlation between real people in the family – in particular father, mother, and self – and the type of God the individual found in experience. Finally, at the very end of our work together, I would ask the subjects to draw a picture of God. Much to my surprise, when the time came, the members of the staff and the patients drew God as though it were the most natural thing in the world.

I was very fortunate that all the people involved in granting me permission to work with the patients were very gracious and accommodating to my requests to interview the patients in my private time. Furthermore, the patients were truly cooperative. In retrospect, I am amazed at the fact that everybody let me do “my thing” and that no one questioned what I was doing. Evening after evening and weekends, I rumbled through the wards carrying my heavy Grundig tape recorder, bunches of paper, and colored pencils. All in all, I interviewed 25 people day after day and kept accumulating data to be studied later.

Once I had collected all this information I had to study it. A critical question had to do with the *dynamic processes* involved in the formation of the internal representation of God; I had to ascertain whether they were similar in normal people and in those who were mentally ill. Freud had repeatedly asserted that dynamic processes are the same in all people and that what differs is the strength of the ego in organizing them at the service of the individual’s goals and needs. I considered it important

for the relevance of my work to demonstrate to myself that in the area of personal belief the same consideration applies. The material had to provide clear evidence that the *processes* of arriving at personal belief were no different in healthy people from the processes in people with mental illness. The only difference between them had to be the type of life experiences that mental patients had to elaborate and the type of defenses their ego used to organize the internal world.

I have described how I proceeded to create a pilot study that could help me better understand the subject of my research, the methods I used in order to perfect them, as well as the people I selected to study. At the end of my first year of residency and with all this material in my hands, I went back to talk to the superintendent of the hospital. I complained that he had not produced a research supervisor and that I preferred to work in an academic setting. He was a bit repentant and confessed that he knew no one who could help me with it. Nonetheless, he promised to talk to the professor of psychiatry at Harvard, the legendary Elvin Semrad, who was in fact interested in religion, being himself a practicing Catholic. He also promised to have me transferred for my next 2 years of residency to a university training program. Dr. Semrad agreed to meet with me whenever he could. The psychiatric program at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston accepted me for my next 2 years. Dr. Paul Myerson, the chairman of the department and professor of psychiatry, welcomed me and was sympathetic to my strange ideas. The training in that department was superb. Dr. Myerson was a well-respected psychoanalyst and most of the faculty and supervisors were analysts; they all applied their psychoanalytic knowledge to the treatment of in-patients and out-patients. I applied for analytic training at the only existing institute in Boston at the time, the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute and was accepted in 1968.

Meanwhile, I used my private time to go over every aspect of the data I had gathered at the Boston State Hospital. I learned that the interviews worked, but they had to be revised and systematized to leave no aspect of the patient's life unexplored in order to correlate it with religious experiences and beliefs. One example among many was the correlation between significant life events such as serious illness or the death of a parent or other type of trauma and the sense of self at that moment of development. Then, I could try to examine the connections between those events and the accompanying sense of self and their correlation with the relationship the individual had with God, including the type of God the individual had formed in his mind. I created a grid where I could enter the responses after the interview in order to compare the cases. The pilot study helped me see that I had to create new questionnaires to explore the correlations between self, mother, father, and the way in which the individual conceived of and related to her God. The questionnaires now were meant to be complementary, aimed at exploring internalized relations with parents and the Deity. For each question in the family questionnaire there were to be several in the God questionnaire so that different aspects of the relationship and the experience with the parent could be explored in the answers to the questionnaire about God. The questionnaires are printed in the book reporting the final work, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (1979). I also changed the order in which I asked for the drawings: in the first interview I would request the drawing of the



family. After that, I would conduct a 2-hour structured interview with the patient about his life. Then, I would ask the individual to complete the family questionnaire and the following week to do the God questionnaire. At the time of our last encounter I would ask for a picture of God. My goal was to minimize the impact of previously discussed material on the drawing of the family and, if possible, the picture of God.

It took me 2 years to understand and elaborate the data I had gathered and to perfect my methods. Now, everything was ready, except that I had no idea where I could find the patients for my study.

### **The Third Unexpected Event**

My residency was coming to an end. I had to decide what my next move would be. Once more, the unexpected took me by surprise. My chairman, Dr. Paul Myerson, called me to say that he wanted me to be the chief resident for the following academic year. I told him that I wanted to do my research and that I could not see how being chief resident could help me. After some discussion of his wishes and my wishes we came to a magnificent compromise: I would be the chief resident of the in-patient unit and he would allow me to use the entire patient population for that year to do my research. I could not have expected such a great gift: all I had to do was to take the little extra time that the interviews required. It was my duty to interview every new patient and at the end of it I could ask for the drawing of the patient's family. It was my duty to see the patients shortly before discharge: my golden opportunity to ask for a picture of God before sending them home. As for the questionnaires, all I had to do was to gather the new patients on Wednesday evenings to give them the family questionnaire as a group and to ask the patients to answer the God questionnaires in the middle of their stay. The pun must be made that this was a heaven sent opportunity.

I was able to study 123 patients. I also collected all the notes the nurses, social workers, art therapists, and residents had written about the patients and the meetings with their families plus the records of previous hospitalizations. Truly, I left no stone that could provide meaningful information unturned. I could honestly say that I had a most complete knowledge of each patient, as complete as a researcher could want to have. Now, I had to transform my sea of data into meaningful patterns that could produce some understanding of the correlations between life experiences and relationship with parents and the sense of being oneself on the one hand and the way in which the patients conceived of a divine being and in particular the type of relationship they had with their divinity, truly, an overwhelming task. Yet, that was not all: I had to produce a dynamically meaningful psychoanalytic theory of the origins and relational meanings of such a relationship to make it acceptable to my analytic colleagues. It was clear to me that my first task was to let the raw material speak and guide me in finding correlations, meanings, patterns, contradictions, errors, and so on. Then I could review the psychoanalytic literature and theorize about my findings. It took me 10 years to complete all these tasks.

I tried to establish as many correlations as appeared objectively obvious to me in all the data I had gathered. At the end of that comprehensive process, I wrote for myself a description of the situation that the patient had with their families growing up and their ensuing sense of self in relation to the type of God they had produced in their lives, as it appeared in the study. I paid particular attention to the relational components of their experiences with their parents and God, in connection with what they felt themselves to be like. The task was slow going, but endlessly fascinating: it was similar to attending a private course on object and self-relations taught to me directly by the patients. My learning grew exponentially. Soon I began to see the similarities between the experiences and types of relatedness of some of the patients. After reviewing all 123 cases I decided, as I had done in my pilot study, to select 20 individuals representing the most significant diagnoses and to write a very extensive case report about each of them covering his or her entire biography. Each case was approximately 80 pages long; truly a lot of writing. Yet, it paid off because I began to see that all the patients fell into four categories in relation to their belief in God: (1) those with a God whose existence they do not doubt; (2) those wondering whether to believe in a God they are not sure exists; (3) those amazed, angered, or quietly surprised to see others deeply invested in a God who does not interest them; and (4) those struggling with a demanding harsh God they would like to get rid of if they were not convinced of His existence and power. My task now was to select a clear example of each stance and to present them as the result of my research. The presentation had to include a clear explanation of the dynamic motives that led each individual to her particular stance and mode of relating to, or alternatively of avoiding, the divinity.

The clinical part had been completed. Now I had to integrate my studies into the body of recognized psychoanalytic knowledge.

## **Psychoanalytic Theory and Religious Experiences**

To be able to theorize cogently within the context of psychoanalytic theory, I had first to make explicit all that Freud had said about the origins of the God representation, the dynamic ways in which people relate to their God, the transformations of the relationship in the course of life, as well as Freud's conception of religion as a cultural psychical phenomenon and his valuation of the function of religion in human life. The task required lengthy perusal of Freud's texts and clinical cases in order to offer myself and my future readers a comprehensive view of his ideas. Those were the days in which neither indexes nor PEP Archives existed to help scholars find their way to Freud's frequently scattered comments about dynamic religious issues in his patients and his cultural comments about religion. His two major works *The Future of an Illusion* (1927/1961) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939/1964) offered fascinating overviews of the processes involved in religious engagement at the personal and cultural level but did not include the clinical details that appear in some of the case reports and correspondence. I had to compare his

ideas at different moments and try to systematize them to offer a clear overview of Freud's substantial contributions to the psychology of religion.

Finally, I had to take into account my own stance in relation to his conclusions [into account]. Freud, in *The Future of an Illusion*, enjoined all human beings to give up their God and to follow him, the mature psychoanalyst, in accepting the tribulations of life without having to cling to a fictional fatherly divinity. I had to confront Freud with his own contradiction: a God that had been shaped from the affective connection with primary objects can neither be erased nor neglected. It can only be dealt with, as Freud himself had said, by using the ordinary defenses we use in relation to any of our internal objects. The particular personal use of the divinity as an internal object and the defenses against its psychic presence need to be understood as part of the motivational and conflicted stance of the individual in relation to his personal God and the objects that contributed to the formation of this God representation. In this respect, the divine being shares its dynamic fortunes and misfortunes with the other internal objects in the person's psychic life. From the technical point of view of a practicing analyst, to neglect the psychic functions of the divinity ends up as equivalent to ignoring some of the critical transformations of internal primary objects at the service of psychic life.

My next task called for a revision of the psychoanalytic conception of psychical representation of objects. To put it briefly, most theories gave the representation the power *to act* and influence the psyche of its possessor. My revision pointed out that representations are memory processes that can be called to psychic life under the conscious or unconscious agency of the individual in order to serve some psychic function at the moment they are tapped by that person's dynamically organized motivations. They are awakened as affectively significant, multisensory, and visceral internal experiences in dialectic interaction with the sense of self of the person at the moment that he calls them to the conscious or unconscious psychic forum.

I had now completed my task. I must say that throughout these years of intensive work I repeatedly tried to engage some colleagues, particularly senior colleagues, to attend to my work or to read what I was writing. Most of the time I was given the cold shoulder and clear indications that I was out of my mind. Dr. Myerson and Dr. Semrad remained supportive of me as a person, but did not help me directly with my conceptual and creative efforts. Truly, their presences kept me sane. Frequently, I was told that my subject deserved at best a short paper. Nonetheless, I was fortunate enough to have Dr. David Brent, the editor of the University of Chicago Press, accept my book manuscript and publish it. That was in 1979. The book is still selling and it has been translated into several languages. Many departments of psychology use it in courses on the psychology of religion.

Once the book was out, the analytic community looked the other way. Howard F. Stein (1981) reviewed it for *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*. There were no other reviews in psychoanalytic journals. Stein offered the following indictment, "Object relations theory is thus used as a crypto-Jungian basis for a psychoanalytic theology" (p. 126). He also said rather directly that I should take myself back to the analytic couch to cure my unanalyzed preoedipal fixations: "There can be no compromise between the preoedipal and oedipal authoritarian character and the post-oedipal

human chary of all belief. Any psychoanalysis which admits such a compromise reveals a lacunar resistance, an incompleteness of analysis in the analyst” (p. 127). That was it for my colleagues. Fortunately, the world of academia, psychiatry, and psychology welcomed my ideas and began to use them in courses, and in masters and doctoral dissertations. A few years later, psychoanalytic institutes began to invite me to lecture on the subject and, finally, I became a sort of a feature whenever people wanted to discuss religion or spirituality. I received two awards: in 1996 the William C. Bier Award, for outstanding contributions to the psychology of religion from Division 36, American Psychological Association and in 1997 the Oskar Pfister Prize, given to me at the May Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, also for my outstanding contributions to the psychology of religion.

I hope I have explained well enough how I became an accidental psychologist of religion. I had no intention to be one. All I was, was an aspiring psychoanalyst and, later, an analyst fascinated by the phenomenon of people’s struggles with their God. I was totally ignorant of the official psychology of religion. I would have failed any exam on the subject if given to me. It was not that I did not respect the discipline and the efforts of those that studied it. My problem and my advantage consisted in the focus of my interest: the internal workings of the mind and subjective experience in relation to the particular psychic object most frequently called God. It was not until 1980 that I met Antoine Vergote, at The First International Conference on Moral and Religious Issues, in the Abbey of Senanque in Southern France. It was then that I learned about his work and his significant psychoanalytic contributions to the understanding of religious psychodynamics.

## New Developments

In 1992 the request that I give a lecture at the exhibition of Freud’s Antiquities in Boston opened my eyes to Freud’s childhood experience with the most unusual of Bibles, the Philippon Bible. Once more, my curiosity was aroused when I noticed that the antiquities shown in the exhibit were very similar to the illustrations in that particular Bible, also shown at the exhibit. The Sherlock Holmes in me was awakened and could not stop pursuing the mysterious story hidden in such similarity. Comprehensive research led me to postulate Freud’s motives for rejecting the God of his parents Rizzuto (1998). The book *Why Did Freud Reject God?: A Psychodynamic Interpretation* was published by Yale University Press in 1998 and in 2001 received the Gradiva Award for the Best Book in Religion, given by the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis recognized the value of my contribution.

Over the course of years I wrote several papers, all focused on psychodynamic aspects of religious experiences. Finally, at the turn of the millennium, in 2000, the Italian Society for the Psychology of Religion made me an honorary member. Thanks to them, in spite of my odd and lonely itinerary, I could in all honesty call myself a psychologist of religion. My self-definition favors the term “psychoanalyst of people’s experiences with their internalized religious objects and beliefs.”

My studies of religious experiences did not exhaust my interest as a psychoanalyst. I became interested in other areas of human experience: language, eating disorders, aggression, masochism and sadism, unconscious fantasy, and, of course, belief as a *psychic function*. I published my papers on these subjects in well-recognized psychoanalytic journals. They were accepted because of their own value. Some of my articles were translated and published in psychoanalytic journals in other languages. I hope to continue to make some contributions to the field of language in analysis, an area that continuously fascinates me.

Now that I can officially call myself a psychologist of religion, I may attempt to answer some of the questions posed to me by Jacob Belzen in an interview.

## **Interview: Questions and Answers**

Question: Did you have any teachers or mentors or models in this field?

Answer: The previous presentation of my work suggests that I did not have anyone to teach or mentor me. I did have models: during the years of my formation as a teacher, I met the Dean of the School of Philosophy at the National University of Córdoba in Argentina. He was a philosopher and a poet. He convinced me about the unsurpassable value of intellectual freedom and personal conviction. I took his teaching to heart. Then, I met Freud in his writings. He seemed to be a model of such daring freedom in the context of rigorous work carried out in isolation. The presences of my professor of philosophy and Freud accompanied me in my long and lonely hours of gathering data and perusing mountains of papers waiting to be deciphered.

Question: How would you define psychology of religion?

Answer: I am not the best person to answer this question. I see religion as a vastly complex phenomenon that interdigitates cultural phenomena (including formally organized religions), personal psychodynamic processes, group dynamics, object relations, and the hard-to-define human search for an elusive dimension of being that transcends the immediate transient reality of everyday meanings, that is, a search for durable meaning. It is clear to me that all the phenomena I have listed owe their existence to a human psyche that participates in creating culture, groups, religions, human relations, and intrapsychic realities including feelings, fantasy, cognition, and that unique human gift of creating new external realities (cars, airplanes, computers, Internet) and unsuspected internal realities. In this context, even the most unusual things must be experienced as religious. An unexpected inspiration to create a new contraption may be felt by the inventor as God's response to her desire to obtain a little satisfaction and fame.

As a result of this manner of understanding human experience, I prefer to talk not about psychology of religion, but psychology of religious experiences in the broadest possible sense. Religion as a concept calls for a living subject who does or experiences

something that in his understanding is “religious.” I prefer to talk about the psychology of the religious subject. This conception does not preclude studying cultural aspects of religion as frequent components of religious actions, thoughts, and feelings. Yet I believe we must keep the distinction clear: to separate the visible and measurable components of anything religious as a way of describing cultural realities from the truly subjective psychological component of a religious personal moment. This clarification may facilitate the integration of external components of religious events and actions with the subjective experience of them. I am aware that this is a long-winded description of the field of the psychology of religion, but I find myself incapable of producing a succinct definition of the discipline.

Question: How do you see the relationship of psychology of religion to other sciences of religion?

Answer: (1) *Relationship to psychoanalysis and psychiatry*: I believe that new discoveries or findings about individual religious experience or cultural religious phenomena may offer psychoanalysts and psychiatrists not only food for thought, but they can also call their attention to new aspects of individuals’ experience and their internal use of primary and other objects.

(2) *Relation to psychotherapy and counseling*: There are many types of psychotherapy and counseling. Practitioners in these fields must find their own ways of using the knowledge obtained by psychologists of religion to serve the particular goals of each helping technique. There are risks to be avoided at all cost: people being helped must never be indoctrinated and their autonomy as individuals must not be bypassed. They must remain the agents of psychic changes. It must be said, not without sadness, that many individuals’ religious experiences are more an act of submission to religious authorities and parental figures than a personal elaboration of the religion offered by their culture. To my way of thinking, psychotherapy and counseling should serve to help individuals to own themselves and to take charge of their personal and religious experiences.

(3) *Relation to theology and ministry*: The Christian theology I have been exposed to addresses the intellect and the beliefs adherents are to hold true. It does not attend to the process of psychic elaboration that an individual needs in order to integrate those beliefs into a lived personal experience. Perhaps we need a new theological discipline that complements the contributions of systematic theology by attending to the receiver of its teachings. I understand that some theologians are aware of this problem and are making some attempts to look into it.

Pastoral ministry is the field that has made and continues to make extensive use of the contributions of the psychology of religion, psychiatric and psychoanalytic insights at the service of helping people on theoretical and practical grounds. The literature is extensive and used in many universities and seminaries. There are also institutes in several universities dedicated to the study of pastoral care. In my opinion, the field of pastoral ministry makes systematic use of many of the contributions from the fields mentioned above. On the other hand, although I cannot claim to be well informed about the subject, I believe that few educators resort to available psychical knowledge in the religious education of children and adolescents.

Question: What place did this subdiscipline hold in the whole of your life work?

Answer: My commitment over the course of my life has been to psychoanalysis as a practice, a method of inquiry, and a theoretical discipline. All my studies on religious experiences were motivated by the dominant psychoanalytic attitude of understanding the participation of unconscious and conscious processes in the formation of subjective experiences. The subdiscipline focuse(s) [d] on a field of human living, the religious life of people, neglected by most psychoanalysts. To my own manner of thinking, I was enlarging a field of knowledge within psychoanalysis. My interest in language, unconscious fantasy, imagery, and affect as aspects of human relating were part of the larger enterprise of learning and understanding as much as I could about the functioning of the mind, a functioning that can only occur in the context of human object relations. The need to relate to others elicits speech, affect, fantasy, and conceptions of the reality in which the individual strives to be accepted and loved. Such strivings keep all human and divine relations going.

Question: Is there a relationship between your religious views and your work in the psychology of religion?

Answer: Yes. I have been a practicing Roman Catholic all my life. My commitment to study the convolutions and tensions between human and divine love started in my late teens, when I was teaching the catechism and the little girl instructed me about following her mother rather than God. I have not yet ceased to remember that painful and fascinating moment. Being called to teach at the Córdoba Seminary reopened that question and forced me to start searching for answers not only in others but also in myself. If I am honest, I have to ask: what kept the belief in a good God alive in me? Earlier I had some inklings, but I came to a full realization about the objects that sustained my religious commitments during my personal analysis. My family was Catholic and we were raised Catholic, but there was not much talk about God or particular devotions. My French maternal grandmother and her two sisters were very special to me. They were women of the world; one of my great-aunts owned a large hotel in Buenos Aires. They had remarkable psychic freedom, were always reliable, and very affectionate with me and my brothers. As a child, I noticed that they were different from other people in that they were always joyful, full of fun, and extremely kind. I could observe how deeply respected they were by the people who dealt with them. I also noticed that they went to Mass every morning and prayed frequently. In my child's mind I connected the dots: my grandmother and great-aunts were so lovely because they were involved with God. In fact, my grandmother always ended her letters to me by writing: "God loves you, ma petite" or a variation of it. These three women became my models and set ideals for me as a woman. I wanted to be like them as a person and as a believer. Obviously, such childhood experiences provided affective motives to explore religious experiences.

Question: Has there been a relationship between important life events and your work in the psychology of religion?

Answer: Yes, first, the encounter with the little girl. Second, my unexpected call to teach at the seminary, and finally, Dr. Myerson offering me the patients I needed for

my study in exchange for my being the chief resident: a true bargain! It seems to me that I would have been a remarkable fool if I had not used such splendid occasions to ponder the religious experiences of my fellow human beings. There are no other life events I can think of that influenced my study of religious issues.

Question: Have there been any conflicts that influenced your work? Or did you run into conflict because of your interest in the psychology of religion?

Answer: There is no conflict I can think of that motivated me. I did run into some mild conflict, a conflict of neglect, because no analyst wanted anything to do with my ideas. I have a mild paranoid fantasy that I have been excluded from some circles because of my “aberrant” ideas. I have no proof to support my paranoia. My participation in American and international psychoanalysis has been rich and fruitful and I have nothing to complain about.

Question: What have been your biggest problems in or with the field?

Answer: I was like a horse running forward with blinders. I had no time to look at the field, and, truly, there was not much at which to look. Once my book *The Birth of the Living God* was published, the field of psychology of religion noticed it and recognized me beyond my expectations. I am very grateful for the generosity of those who accepted my contributions and honored them. My fellow psychoanalysts took a much longer period of time before reading what I had written. This response answers the next question: psychology of religion did not give me any problem. My fellow analysts gave me only one: they ignored my work.

Question: What has been your greatest contribution to the psychology of religion?

Answer: I believe that I have repeatedly demonstrated the great psychic complexity of the simplest of religious experiences. I have shown, following Freud, the correlation between childhood experiences with parents and the type of relationship the individual has with his or her God. I have provided evidence of the importance of the mother in the formation of the representation of the divinity and its influence on modes of relatedness to it. I have illustrated that the examination of a person’s private beliefs adds to the psychoanalytic knowledge about the internal creative and defensive processes involved in dealing with primary objects. I have proven that the relationship with a divine being always occurs in relation to the sense of self, of who we are. They change in tandem. Finally, I have shown, particularly in my published cases, that the psychoanalytic process can reach and transform deeply held pathological beliefs about oneself and the divinity.

Question: What has been your greatest disappointment in or with the field?

Answer: My greatest disappointment is to see that psychoanalysts have not taken my ideas to heart and miss the opportunity to learn about the use of primary objects at the service of unexplored personal religious beliefs. Analysts are still afraid of touching their patients’ religious issues. The present-day evolution in the direction of spirituality adds an external dimension to the avoidance of the internal object that many call God. Some sociocultural phenomena, such as the dissolution of the



nuclear family and great global mobility together with the new thinking introduced by postmodernity may contribute to this shift from religion based on object relations to a religion seeking understanding of transcendent realities through concepts linked to the needs of the self.

Question: How do you evaluate the psychology of religion?

Answer: I think we should be grateful for the great variety of issues studied and what we have learned from them. The previously unsuspected correlations and descriptions of behavioral and personal patterns emerging from the great variety of methods applied to learning about people's religious beliefs remain a contribution. I will consider at this point the psychology of religion as a discipline rather than a science because it is so difficult to create an integrated body of knowledge. This is not a criticism but a description of the difficulties of the subject matter. "Religion" is not something that can be encompassed by neat concepts. Yet religious elements may be meaningfully studied in an effort to know more about the phenomenon people call "religion." We have a long way to go to capture the essence of such elusive experiences.

Question: What are your expectations for the field?

Answer: I hope that scholars of the psychology of religion will create refined methods capable of gaining access to the subjective experience of the people involved in public or private religious activities. To my way of thinking, it is important to remember that calling a personal moment of one's own a religious experience is always an act of *subjective interpretation*. What prompts a person to call a dream, just a dream, and another to consider his dream an actual divine revelation? The same idea applies to group activities, when people interpret their joint actions as religious in their social context. The study of such interpretive processes may open up much knowledge about the social and psychic function of religion. Although my knowledge of the field is limited, I am sure there are people researching some of these issues.

Question: Any advice you would like to give to present practitioners or to persons who might want to become such?

Answer: Yes. Religions of any type represent our most complex efforts as human beings to make sense of our truly strange condition: a temporally limited being confronted with the certitude of death, as the unavoidable final dissolution of the only self we have. No one can avoid knowing our limited allowance of being. When we are newly born, we survive by clinging psychically to a human object that contributes her being as the physical and psychical food to create our own being. That early experience marks us for the rest of our lives. Freud claimed that religious people cling to the father (he was afraid of his mother) and need to grow up and become self-sustaining adults. That is what he said; I have shown in my book, *Why Did Freud Reject God?: A Psychodynamic Interpretation*, that he could not do it. Unknown to him, he clung to his father who remained present in displaced disguise in Freud's antiquities. He opted to die in their presence. My advice to future researchers is a

plea that they pay attention to the transmutations, reorganizations, and elaborations that people carry out in their minds to find a way to rest on someone, human or divine, because no one is psychically capable of standing on his or her own. The one or ones we select to remain our companions and offer us some rest reveals the psychic history of who we have become.

## Conclusion

I hope I have presented myself and my work with all honesty. It is a fact that I never gave a thought to being a psychologist of religion. I became one simply by the accidents of my intense curiosity about what I had encountered and what I was called to do. I am glad and proud that I am called a psychologist of religion and that I have had the good fortune to make some contributions to the field. I am particularly grateful to those who have recognized the value of my work and accepted me as a member of their broad community of researchers.

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## Chapter 12

# Anthropology as a Voyage of Discovery: Or, Everything that Finds Expression in Humans Merits Reflection\*

Joachim Scharfenberg



### Education and Early Employment

I started out as a medical student; I wanted to become a physician. My hopes were dashed very early on, however: I decided after only a few semesters to change over to theology, but continued to study psychology and theology in tandem. In 1952 I obtained my PhD in theology, having written my dissertation on Johann Christoph Blumhardt (Scharfenberg, 1959). This study of Blumhardt's importance to spiritual care was my first independent step toward the psychology of religion, although I had become acquainted to some extent with the subject during my studies. I studied in

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\*This text has been compiled from a long interview recorded in June 1991 in Kiel. The selection of material and footnotes, as well as bibliographic and biographical details, are the work of the editor (J.A.B.). I am indebted to Dr. H. Wahl and particularly to Dr. E. Nase for their help in finalizing this text.

Jena, Halle, and Tübingen, in the last also with Eduard Spranger (1882–1963), who in his late years once again lectured and published on the psychology of religion in a most impressive way.

Then I spent a year in the United States, where the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) movement had begun, and I was trained in clinical pastoral education. In 1953 I was among the first group of Europeans to be given the opportunity to take part in this program, which included clinical work in psychiatry, research conferences, encounter groups, and theory seminars. It was a didactic program based on the principle of “learning by doing,” very practically oriented. We were literally thrown into it. The very first day I was faced with a schizophrenic patient, who uttered a very meaningful sentence, one that I’ll never forget, “I have lost my nails,” he said, and I was struck by how unbelievably symbolic that piece of communication was.

In the United States I ran into Anton Boisen, who has remained very important to me, and who has still not been sufficiently discussed. In his book, *The Exploration of the Inner World* (Boisen, 1936), he put forward the thesis, important at that time, that one must understand people, “living human documents,” by means of the same hermeneutic key with which we approach texts. And that actually became the guideline of both my research and my teaching. It is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs that we have a hermeneutics for biblical interpretation, but a completely different hermeneutics for understanding people. This shortcoming, particularly in Germany, struck me at the time. In Germany we had had a rich body of psychology of religion literature, but it had been abruptly discontinued. I hold two things responsible for this: dialectical theology and, of course, Nazi rule, which simply forbade research into the psychology of religion (see below). In the German tradition there were Karl Girsensohn (1875–1925), Werner Gruehn (1887–1961), and others like them, who were experientially and, owing to James, phenomenologically oriented, but always indebted to Schleiermacher, who, after all, had also lectured in psychology.

After my year in the United States, where I worked both in a private psychiatric practice and at a general hospital, I returned to Germany, where I found that very little interest was taken in the field. The strange thing, of course, is that after the collapse of the Nazi regime, dialectical theology reigned supreme, and it practically forbade any observations on the subject of the psychology of religion. That is why, even when studying theology, I heard almost nothing about such things, even though they had always interested me as a student of psychology.

After spending a year in America, I could not return to my church back home in Sachsen-Anhalt (in those days the Cold War was fully under way) so I went to Berlin instead. There I worked for the time being in an ordinary parish, but I soon began looking for a job as a hospital chaplain. At first people found this disconcerting, and I’ll never forget how someone said to me, “How come? You, a strong young man, and you haven’t even stolen a silver spoon! What on earth are you doing as a hospital chaplain?” In those days a pastoral care-giver at a hospital was at the very bottom of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. But I persevered and found work at a large clinic in East Berlin. My first experiences there strengthened the impression I had already received in the United States that my psychological background was inadequate, and so I decided to follow the whole course of psychoanalytical training at the Berlin Institute of Psychoanalysis.

It was not easy to gain admission. To be sure, I had my degree in psychology, but probably even more important was the fact that in Berlin it was thought that the problem of so-called lay analysis had not been resolved satisfactorily, which is why, with reference to Freud, they had taken on others, in addition to physicians. Berlin, after all, had the only nucleus of psychoanalysis in Germany; the rest had all been destroyed. In Berlin, during the Nazi period, a doctor (a psychiatrist, the cousin of Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring) had been given the job of organizing German psychotherapy. In 1933 C. G. Jung had gotten carried away and had made some very strange and unforgivable pro-Nazi remarks, which, however, led him to be held in high regard in Nazi Germany. (He had called psychoanalysis “Jewish psychology,” which he believed to be a trash heap of unfulfilled childish wishes, and contrasted it with “Aryan psychology,” or the psychology of northern Germanics.) After nearly all the Jewish psychotherapists had stopped practicing or been forced to emigrate (a few were even killed) an institute was established in Berlin, at which the Jungians held sway. Yet their loyalty to their colleagues and their openness gave a handful of Freudian psychoanalysts an opportunity to work in secrecy and thus to survive. Only a few years after the war, this small group re-established the German Psychoanalytic Association, which once more gained international recognition. Among its ranks, for example, was Carl Müller-Braunschweig (1881–1958), who was also interested in psychology of religion questions. That was one reason for my decision to train as a psychoanalyst at this institution, from which I graduated in 1961.

After a spell as a hospital pastor I worked for a while at the Protestant Academy. After that I was given the job of setting up a Protestant advice bureau and hotline in Berlin. One of my first teaching assignments was in the field of chaplain training, the second phase of theological studies. Here I taught pastoral psychology and the psychology of religion.

## **Early Experiences in Pastoral Psychology and the Psychology of Religion**

Back in the 1950s, the publisher of *Wege zum Menschen* (Paths to Man) entrusted me with his journal, which at the time was very much in decline and in need of revival. This, however, provided me with a platform for discussion. The circle of people who sought contact between doctor and pastor soon noticed that we lacked the expertise for the kind of counseling and pastoral work we wanted to do. This triggered a run on professional qualifications, which is why the so-called pastoral care movement in Germany consisted at first in the acquisition of psychological expertise. As far as I can see, the main focus was on depth psychology, because after the damage done to our tradition in the Nazi era, so-called academic psychology was obsessed for the time being with the idea of acquiring academic qualifications, particularly in the sciences.

In Germany, there was a serious dispute between psychology conceived as a scientific discipline and psychology conceived as a discipline of the humanities. The latter had, however, proved susceptible to Nazi thinking and had therefore been

discredited after the war. This is what really caused the break with tradition, and the only ones who quickly took up this thread again were the psychoanalysts. So for the time being that was also the path to be taken in pastoral psychology.

Following this path, therefore, I encountered early on Freud's writings on religion and attempted to come to terms with them. This gave rise to my postdoctoral thesis *Sigmund Freud und seine Religionskritik als Herausforderung für den christlichen Glauben* (Sigmund Freud and his Criticism of Religion as a Challenge to the Christian Faith; Scharfenberg, 1968/1988), in which I sought to show that the apologetic prejudices against Freud on the part of theology are justified only in part, particularly because we have all learned from dialectical theology to see religious criticism as a theological issue. After all, Karl Barth also engaged in religious criticism! And I was simply following in his footsteps with psychoanalytic means (cf. Scharfenberg, 1972). In doing so, I also rediscovered, above all, Oskar Pfister (1873–1956), who was completely undisputed among theologians, despite the publication in 1944 of his important book *Das Christentum und die Angst* (Christianity and Fear; Pfister, 1944/1948). For me it was a real discovery, finding a man who had written so much but to whom so little attention had been paid up to then, just because it had all been swept under the carpet. One of my students completed an extensive study on him (Nase, 1993). My work in those days was, broadly speaking, also religious criticism in the spirit of Pfister: I was attempting, to be exact, to diagnose and treat neurotic forms of religion, and also to engage in church criticism. This was the core of my work in the 1950s and 1960s.

There were, of course, strong reactions to my work from fundamentalist circles in the church (who were bent on denouncing group dynamism, among other things). But this also gave rise to the question: what, then, is the specific nature of people who occupy themselves with the psychological side of pastoral care and with religious phenomena? The psychology of religion cropped up again here, but from the practical angle, that is to say: what is our specific task? How do we differ from psychotherapists, who do not concern themselves at all with the religious aspect? Theologians reproached us for tainting the practice of piety by importing ideological prejudices from psychoanalysis and other psychological movements. This prompted us to ask ourselves: what is the specifically Christian aspect? In this context we devoted ourselves to questions of phenomenology and psychology of religion. The main hypothesis I have been pursuing since the book, *Einführung in die Pastoralpsychologie* (Introduction to Pastoral Psychology; Scharfenberg, 1985), is this: we can practice pastoral psychology only as the psychology of religion, because modern human being is, in fact, more religious than he himself realizes.

Here Boisen's old proposition is again relevant: one must seek to understand living human documents through the interpretation of religious tradition, and vice versa! In the last 20 years it has become my life's goal to find the reciprocal link between the individual and religion. This means that in working with people one must always bear in mind: where do I come up against the submerged remains of religious phenomena? And when working with (religious) texts: where do I find fundamentally human conflicts and the ways they are handled? "Symbol" thus became my code word (Scharfenberg, 1997; Scharfenberg & Kämpfer, 1980).

Dealing with conflicts symbolically is something I find in the great documents of religious faith as well as in people's practical lives. When it backfires, symbolic treatment can lead to psychoneurotic symptoms such as obsessive-compulsive behavior and other individualistic symbolic systems. In my psychoanalytical work with individuals I had a couple of key cases to which I devoted a great deal of study.

At the time when I again had the courage to avow that I, too, was a psychologist of religion – despite Karl Barth's adage that religion is the original sin of man – I encountered in our German tradition a perverted religiosity, namely in the form of the Nazi ideology that invented a myth. (Compare Alfred Rosenberg's successful book *Der Mythos des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* [The Myth of the Twentieth Century].) In therapy sessions with the children of victims as well as culprits of the Nazi period, one of the large themes that emerged for me is the reappraisal of this undoubtedly religious ideology produced by perverted religious ideas. In Germany it has by no means been reappraised, but repressed instead; it is for this reason, too, that we are now experiencing such an explosive recurrence of repressed right-wing radicalism. Almost as though we were living through this period of history a second time, in that we are again attempting, by repressing history, to turn our backs on something that cannot possibly turn out right. And that's exactly why my observations and research in the psychology of religion are inextricably tied to political considerations.

I worriedly watch the developments surrounding Drewermann, whose interpretation (based on depth psychology) of religious traditions had such a tremendous impact, even though it turned into remythologization in grand style.<sup>1</sup> In my opinion, his unhistorical thinking, which attempts to tie everything to certain fundamental structures in religious phenomena, is dangerous. I also have trouble with Jung's hypothesis of archetypes. As I was trained thoroughly in historical thinking, I cannot approve of the ontology underlying this thought. And this is why one of my slogans is, "Don't remythologize, resymbolize!" All fundamentalism is connected with the fact that symbols are interpreted literalistically and therefore misunderstood.

Incidentally, I did not have it easy as a theologian within the psychoanalytic factions in Germany, among whom the subject of religion was taboo. Psychoanalysis had, in fact, emigrated to the United States; the international psychoanalytic movement was already dominated by the Americans during the war, and even more so after the war, and they turned out to be curiously blind to sociocritical impulses in psychoanalysis. Granted, they flourished in prosperous postwar America, and were very successful at popularization. In my opinion, however, they became blind to the deeper roots of psychoanalysis, which is bound up in significant ways with religious phenomena. Let's take Judaism in particular. This was a decisive factor for Freud, and there were even some Americans, including the Jewish philosopher of religion

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<sup>1</sup>Eugen Drewermann (\*1940) is a German theologian who became widely known in his native country because of his criticism of the Roman Catholic Church. In his scholarly works, he drew heavily on Jungian depth psychology. An ordained Roman Catholic priest, he was no longer allowed to teach at the Church's seminaries after 1991. On his 65th birthday he left the Catholic Church.

David Bakan, who detected these Jewish-religious roots in Freud's work (Bakan, 1958/1990). The resulting critical discussion has always been of particular interest to me. That's how "pastoral psychology" ended up being my keyword (after I had studied and written mainly about methods of spiritual care). What is more, it was difficult enough to prove (in fact, it has only begun to be proven) that Freud was strongly interested in religion throughout his life and that he developed the beginnings of a fruitful psychology of religion (cf. Nase & Scharfenberg, 1977).

## Experiences at the University

From Berlin I went to Tübingen at the beginning of the 1960s, because I wanted to qualify as a professor. I was seeking to put my practical knowledge to use in teaching. It had always been my goal in life to work with individual sufferers, to generalize what I had learned and formulate it as a theory, to apply it in turn to the changes taking place in the church and in society. Since 1971 I have been trying to do just that here in Kiel; I have given therapy sessions to individuals and groups, and tried to put my experience to use in teaching.

In the practice of pastoral psychology I could put Heije Faber's approach to use. I became acquainted with Piper, who had studied in Holland, and there was a whole series of younger people, such as Dieter Stollberg (\*1937) and Hans-Joachim Thilo (1914–2003), who had also been in the United States and had brought back stimulating new ideas. In those years we felt like a subversive group, because we were so few in number and the theologians took little notice of us.

In the psychology of religion I mainly studied older writings, such as those of James. I also dug up some of the writings of the older Germans, such as Georg Wobbermin (1869–1943), Karl Girgensohn, and others like them. From an epistemological viewpoint, these works were often unacceptably naïve, indulging in an ideal of objectivity which to my mind had meanwhile been outdated in epistemology. This made their reception difficult, but in those days one delved into anything and everything that existed in this field. These beginnings, too, were certainly experience-related, each in its own way. The problem, admittedly, is what one understands by experience.

All of this made me much more aware of the whole hermeneutical debate. Human communication proceeds almost entirely by means of language, which is reason enough to think about linguistic constructions and verbal communication. One quickly reaches the conclusion that pure objectivity in the field of language and linguistic products is absolutely impossible. Moreover, one soon runs into the dubious nature of the Cartesian distinction between subject and object. That is why I seek, in particular, hermeneutical models that have superseded the subject–object distinction, which is precisely the case in depth psychology. Freud, however, thought he was an empiricist in the scientific sense, as did Jung, but that is most certainly a self-misunderstanding. Instead, they were more like empirically grounded hermeneuticists. I always had my students read the writings of hermeneuticists, starting



with Ricoeur, often in combination with Eliade. Years ago I spent a research semester in Chicago, where I had the opportunity to hear both Ricoeur and Eliade, both of whom commuted between Paris and Chicago, and this juxtaposition always seemed to me to be a fruitful one. It was there, by the way, that I became acquainted with Homans, from whom not much had been heard since the publication of his books on Jung and Freud.<sup>2</sup>

## What Is Religion?

It is difficult to define religion, but here is an attempt to do so: it is being committed to ideas that have a quality of transcendence and thus are not exhausted by practicalities. Central to this definition is the (affective!) commitment to ideas that emanate from the present, that cannot be objectified, and that therefore do not easily lend themselves as objects of objectifying research. It is precisely the challenging nature of religious phenomena that people find attractive, because such phenomena open up an imagination that works ever more strongly against the impoverishment of our linguistic world and its deterioration into mere information. The aesthetic element plays a very big part in this. In religious phenomena it is almost always highly relevant; we discover this again in the work of someone like Umberto Eco and his reception aesthetics (Eco, 1979/1987). Thus a completely different kind of cognition and access are necessary from that in objectifying science.

I find the affective fleshing out of ideas important in this context. This is not necessarily specific to religion, but it becomes so when these ideas have arisen within a specific tradition. There is no formal difference to nonreligious ideas, but the content does differ. To my mind Christian faith consists in trusting the meaning of ideas and symbols that have been handed down to us in a specific way and therefore have a specific history of influence.

In fact, everyone is religious. Modern research into narcissism did a lot to elucidate for me religious phenomena and experiences and ideas. The development of psychoanalysis by Heinz Kohut in Chicago exerted a great influence on me. This theory makes it possible to show that a relational structure underpins the beginnings of human existence – Kohut calls it narcissistic – in which the separation of subject and object is transcended, and fusion occurs.

The wider interest in examining the connection between narcissism and religion was, to some extent, my doing. As early as 1973 I published an article on the subject Scharfenberg (1973), and since then other writers have taken up the theme. The Munich theologian Heribert Wahl wrote a very good book about narcissism

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<sup>2</sup> After the two books mentioned, Peter Homans also published *The Ability to Mourn: Disillusionment and the Social Origins of Psychoanalysis* (Homans, 1970, 1979, 1989). After his death, Parsons, Jonte-Pace, and Henking published a commemorative volume (2008), which was the theme of a special edition of the journal *Pastoral Psychology*, published in 2009.

(Wahl, 1985), and I expect him to make further contributions. The theologian Hans-Günther Heimbrock also explored this terrain in his work on Spinoza (Heimbrock, 1981). In the period when he attended meetings of our societies in Kiel, I strongly urged him to investigate the theme of narcissism. It is actually a continuation of Faber's approach, to see religion not only from the perspective of the oedipal conflict (cf. Faber, 1972/1973). And that would also be an interesting addition to Sundén, with his role theory and sociopsychological reflections.

## **The Psychology of Religion: Resistance and Opportunities**

As touched upon above, I blame two factors for the decline of the old psychology of religion in Germany: National Socialism and dialectical theology. The Nazis felt instinctively that their power rested on the fact that they disseminated a subliminal religiousness, which is why they used vague, puffed-up, pseudoreligious language and built up such cults. They were, of course, uninterested in a critical psychology of religion, because if one were actually bent on analyzing their pose as religiosity or precisely as deformed religiosity, then their constructs would collapse. The Nazis would certainly have felt threatened to the core at the mere mention of such phenomena or at least at their introduction into scientific discourse.

Unfortunately, the type of psychology of religion practiced by people in the resistance movement has either remained virtually unknown or has sunk into oblivion. John Rittmeister (1898–1943), for example, who was killed in Berlin by the Nazis, left us manuscripts in which he attempted to analyze such religious phenomena from the viewpoint of psychoanalysis. Naturally these writings were not allowed to be published! One only has to think of Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957), who sought to demonstrate the religious roots of fascism and met, of course, with fierce opposition. On the other hand, there were attempts, though only a few, to bring the psychology of religion completely in line with Germanic myths. These people were naturally ensured of professorships. J. W. Hauer (1881–1962), for instance, tried to restore the Germanic religion. None of this has yet been fully clarified academically, inasmuch as conclusive investigations are lacking.

Dialectical theology, on the other hand, resembled in some respects the older psychology of religion, but in profound nescience. It was fascinated with the objectivity ideal and in this respect almost worshipful of science. Just think of Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976). He was simply mistaken when he decreed that modern man no longer knew what to do with myths. Today, in fact, we are experiencing a wave of religiosity that was inconceivable 30 years ago. This vagabond religiosity, as I like to call it, is an interesting field of research, involving religious phenomena that have “migrated” out of the church. Whole publishing companies are growing rich selling huge editions of religious sources, often without commentary, thus creating in people who have lost their ties to a religious cult the illusion that they can satisfy their religious needs by reading.

I must introduce a completely different notion: the psychohistorical way of looking at things. After Erikson initiated this idea in his book on Luther (Erikson, 1958), it was adopted by Demause in the United States and brought into the political arena. This seems to me to be an exceptionally fruitful approach, which avoids the danger of the unhistorical, which I feel to be so virulent among the Jungians. That is why, when teaching the psychology of religion, I have mainly given seminars, which seek (from a psychohistorical perspective) to understand texts of the past as well as contemporary religious phenomena, which currently manifest themselves in countless works of popular literature. This is the direction taken by what I was attempting to impart to my students. One can characterize the work with the keyword “symbolic didacticism,” meaning a new form of religious pedagogy and adult education. I’m also thinking of new methods, such as the bibliodrama: playfully immersing oneself in texts and thus stirring up one’s own submerged religious sources in order to reflect deeply on them. Those are a couple of starting points for me, to pass on ideas in an experience-near way.

I’m not interested in purely historical or phenomenological research on religion. My whole development has been too one-sided for that. My main field of interest has always been to show people, in an experience-near way, that the religious roots buried in one’s inner self can be revitalized. They shouldn’t simply run to seed, though; instead, they should be pondered critically. This was the starting point from which my pastoral psychology and my psychology of religion developed under critical consideration. (I am, incidentally, mostly seen as a critic as well, and so naturally I’ve become the target of fundamentalist and conservative criticism, although it has usually been aimed at my concept of spiritual care. An idea of mine that came in for particularly fierce criticism was my disapproval of the linking of spiritual care and preaching. For 30 years the motto “spiritual care is preaching” was taken to be the gospel truth; I fought it tooth and nail.)

I also work as a pastor and am a preacher at the University Church here in Kiel. Here, too, I steadfastly attempt to draw attention to phenomena such as those previously described as vagabond religiosity, which have not been taken into account in the internal church and theological debate. The national railways in Germany used to have a slogan, “Everyone talks about the weather except us.” Similarly, this could be the church’s slogan, “Everyone talks about religion except us.”

Nowadays the psychology of religion is practically nonexistent in Germany. One could count among its exponents the superb book *Das Konzil der Buchhalter* (The Council of the Bookkeepers) by Lorenzer (1981; Konrad Lorenzer [1913–1989] was a very important man anyway.) In some respects Drewermann belongs among them too, inasmuch as he practices an implicit psychology of religion. Other intellectuals come close to the matter, but then dissociate themselves more or less from the psychology of religion. Here in Kiel we have, for example, the philosopher Kurt Hübner, who wrote a very good book on myth (1985). That, however, is philosophy of religion, as is so much else. Whether this glaring shortage is also part of the aftermath of the Nazi regime, which I discussed earlier, has not yet become clear to me. Obviously the psychology of religion is practiced more in other countries, by Erikson, Fowler, and a host of others.

## **Between Theology and Psychology, Between Pastoral Care and Psychotherapy**

I understand the psychology of religion as the critical analysis of religious phenomena by means of instruments proven effective in the field of therapy. In this tentative definition resounds a note of the above-mentioned circle. Thus I bring certain instruments into the interpersonal encounter of the therapy session, and then I leave this situation in the sense that I take what I have heard and learned from my clients and attempt to give it a broader meaning. With all of my patients I inevitably run into religious phenomena, even with those who don't know that I'm a theologian, or who didn't have a firm Christian upbringing. When it's necessary to put inner processes into words, one can only fall back on images and ideas informed by religion. In this way I try to universalize individual experiences and put this circle reciprocally in motion again and again, hence to understand an individual from the perspective of general phenomena, and to make generalizations proceeding from the individual.

When something religious somehow comes to light in the course of psychoanalysis or in a psychotherapeutical situation, I try to differentiate between the individual and the supraindividual. The individual is determined, first of all, solely biographically, and can therefore be assessed according to the rules of psychoanalysis. Yet I find more and more that this isn't possible in any thoroughgoing way. I dispute Freud's conviction that these ideas can be dispersed, more generally, that religion will dissolve with the relentlessness of a growth process. There remain supraindividual characteristics, of which it certainly cannot be assumed that they will be passed down genetically, as Jung thought. They actually derive from the interactive play of mother and child and from the socialization processes. As far as the handing down of religious traditions is concerned, we have to some extent two strands: an external tradition, recorded in written documents, and an internal, oral tradition, which is imbued with religious images and ideas.

In contrast to my work in psychotherapy, as a pastoral caregiver I am an explicitly religious symbolic figure, as is only to be expected from someone in my position. This is why in this role I try to mobilize the religious resources that people possess unconsciously, to come to terms with and to resolve conflicts, because the decision to seek pastoral help is so often prompted by a conflict. For the most part, these conflicts are not specifically religious issues, but matrimonial conflicts, problems in child-raising, and so on. And the more one is able, through one's own religious practice, also with the help of bibliodrama and suchlike, to think of a tradition-based solution to a human conflict, the more it is likely to be understood not as preaching "from above" but as an offer to use religious symbols in order to resolve the conflict. Incidentally, in this way one can sometimes be spared from taking the long way around. I have done many classical analyses, lasting as long as, say, 600 h. More and more, however, I end up giving a shorter course of therapy. In the pastoral care encounter, I see the possibility of "curtailing" the whole way back to one's earliest childhood by working with (religious) symbols, in which those fundamental human conflicts are virulent.

Nowadays my thinking is much more imbued with models of connection than with models of distinction. I thus see no great difference between psychotherapy

and pastoral care. I'm much more interested in working out their parallels and their common ground than in determining what separates them. What really fascinates me is that psychotherapists who are not bigoted are confronted sooner or later with certain phenomena that defy textbook interpretation, and yet they must somehow be interpreted. At this point one can no longer do without the category of "religious phenomena." Kohut is a striking example of this. He has spoken to me about this repeatedly, and was very taken with the idea of having someone with theological expertise in his circle. (I often visited him, and was also supervised by him.)

For me theology is, first and foremost, an attempt to forge and justify a link in the prevailing historical situation between tradition and *Zeitgeist*, and to bring those two quantities into a reciprocal critical-creative dialogue.

Theologically, I have been strongly influenced by Tillich, even though I was educated in dialectical theology, which I had internalized completely. In the United States, however, I met Tillich, and became a convert! Barth stands for separation, of course, for distinction: for him that was crucial; Tillich stands for connection, for correlation. With respect to the theological literature, I have otherwise read mainly Moltmann, Sölle, a few Americans, such as Don Browning of Chicago and John Patton of Atlanta, and of course Schleiermacher again and again. On the whole, however, I read many more works by psychologists!

I studied theology for the same reason I began to study medicine: I wanted to help people. While still a schoolboy I was interested in the gray area between these two disciplines. In the whole of my youth, there were only three possibilities for me, projected, of course, on my great hero Albert Schweitzer: music, medicine, and theology. It is only now, in old age, that this triad has become properly integrated, and I consider this a triumph. Talking about music: in Germany we are experiencing renewed interest in the liturgy, which is the subject that attracts the biggest crowds at my lectures. In seminars, too, we've turned to music; I now sing Gregorian chant with the students. We try to listen in on this world and to understand it as an expression of religiosity.

I would describe as religious an experience in which, unexpectedly and without my trying to "stage" it, an idea takes on the aspect for me of something that absolutely concerns me and is therefore tied up with me in a holistic way. I want to try to make that clear. Since Luther, we have concluded our church services with the Aaronic Blessing. For a long time this was a sign that the service had come to an end. Recently, more and more people have been reporting that they have a special experience with this symbol of the Lord's shining face. They have the feeling, "Here's something that absolutely concerns me," as well as a feeling of profound security beyond the realm of verbal reflection.

## **The Future of the Psychology of Religion**

If I had the opportunity to found an institution for the study of the psychology of religion, I would like to see others in addition to psychoanalysts working there. I would certainly hire some ecumenically minded scholars, and also stimulate

interreligious dialogue. There are, in fact, quite a few areas of common experience, with the eastern religions too, which, after all, never underwent the subject–object distinction in the history of ideas. There would be a lot to learn about the immediacy and conveyance of religious experiences. I know too little about it, but the Eastern way fascinates me greatly. From a scholarly perspective, a lot more could be done here. Are the Eastern religions setting anything in motion in us? Do they appeal to people because of the friction they create with typically European socialization? What factors are at work here?

A great deal can certainly be expected from the perspective of systems theory. We must surmount individualistic constrictions and consider connections, as they are now being studied in family systems. Our customary scientific thinking inclines toward isolating singularities and then representing them objectively, which is exactly why the systems-theoretical approach to the psychology of religion could be so fruitful. I consider Sundén's role theory to be a first step in that direction; we should continue down that path. And of course we should include cultural psychology, and especially historical psychology.

Such themes as "Psychoanalysis and the Bible" or "Exegesis and Psychology" would be promising. Someone like the New Testament specialist Gerd Theißen in Heidelberg is carrying out excellent work in this area. He has, for example, written a fantastic book on the psychological aspects of Pauline theology (Theißen, 1983). His wife is a psychologist, and he has appropriated from her much that is relevant. I once worked with him for a semester in Copenhagen, where I had been entrusted with setting up a course in practical theology. For a whole semester I traveled to Copenhagen every week. Theißen took part in my seminar, and this was the beginning of an enduring friendship.

Here in Kiel we also experienced for a time a kind of interdisciplinary euphoria. I held interdisciplinary seminars with nearly all of my colleagues in other disciplines. For example, we studied "Problems of Identity in Paul" or "Comfort in the Old Testament." There was similar collaboration with colleagues outside the field of theology, with historians and sociologists. But the momentum has dropped off considerably. My contribution to such seminars consisted mainly in providing working hypotheses, by means of which one could, for example, better understand a man like Paul by examining the available biographical data.

I also worked with psychologists on occasion, but that was sometimes agonizing. Once we held a seminar with equal numbers of psychologists and theologians (20 of each). Just finding a common language was unbelievably difficult. We had to spend an awful lot of time on this aspect, because the psychologists were so keen to express everything in quantifiable terms. The main lesson learned at this seminar was the psychologists' realization that 100% quantifiability is impossible in this field. That is why I cannot imagine that psychologists will take an increased interest in the psychology of religion. The issue that brought me together with many a psychologist, also in those days in Berlin, was the sociocritical aspect. Nowadays I'm a left-winger. I owe a lot to the Frankfurt school, not least philosophically. Habermas's analysis of the cognitive interests that govern scientific development was a great help to me (1968/1971).

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## Chapter 13

# Why the Psychology of Religion? A Rocky Path to Self-Understanding

**Bernard Spilka**



Writing any kind of autobiography is daunting, difficult, and somewhat distressing. I fear both the egocentrism and inaccuracy such an effort may convey, yet I am also flattered to be asked to accept such a responsibility. This is a serious task but it should not be a grave and solemn one. It has its limits and I have always enjoyed embracing a little irreverence now and then. I do feel I should pen various biographical views for those who will follow me. These will help complete a life well lived since my birth in 1926. Consider that I feel I am so old that I remember when the Dead Sea was only sick. I stole that line from a now deceased comedian. In any event with much ambivalence I offer the following primarily relative to my work in the psychology of religion. Most of those to whom I relate professionally assume that my attraction to the field is an expression of a deep religious commitment. I do not

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B. Spilka (✉)  
Professor Emeritus, Psychology, University of Denver  
e-mail: bspilka@du.edu



share those views. This is not to say that I have never sampled their vision for I have lived the religious quest from one extreme to the other. Complexity has replaced simplicity and tradition; my current predilection is to seek answers by adhering to a hard science viewpoint. Let me therefore employ these pages to locate the path to my current inclinations. Returning to the task at hand, my guess is that at least two courses became interwoven in my becoming a psychologist of religion: religion and psychology. Underlying these are probably some more basic propensities.

## **Religion as a Possible Early Avenue to the Psychology of Religion**

In my primary years, orthodox Judaism infused my family's daily existence. In all things, deviation from absolute conformity was never tolerated. Weekly attendance at services both Friday evening and Saturday (Shabbat) plus holidays were not to be questioned. I dutifully obeyed until adolescence when internal struggle came to the fore and more or less persisted ever since.

At the age of 9, I began studying in a Talmud Torah (Hebrew School) from Monday through Thursday immediately after regular public school. I began as a dedicated student who achieved the distinction of being the second fastest reader of the Hebrew prayers in the school. Halfway through my eleventh year, I became a behavior problem to my teachers and the school principal, a very strict rabbi who felt he had to notify my parents, at least once or more a week. Simple conformity was slipping away at an increasing pace. My father tried to be warm and understanding; my mother showed little emotional restraint. Another consideration was entering the picture. I was growing very fast and soon was taller than my parents. Religious schooling ended for me with my Bar Mitzvah as my six-foot frame towered above the rabbi, cantor, and virtually every other adult who participated in this service.

New requirements to attend very early morning services were instituted but my resistance continued to grow and by the age of fifteen, I refused to attend further. This religious background obviously sensitized me to the significance of its role in life, so it could not have been too far in the back of my mind not to be called upon later regarding its research potential.

In those times with specific friends, religion was partially transformed into culture as I grew aware of variations in language and life expectations. We had secret words that represented attitudes. These derived from Yiddish. Then there was an ever-present fear of anti-Semitism which I am sure inculcated a lifelong sensitivity, if not paranoia, relative to such possibilities. My earliest pertinent memories take me back to our neighborhood in New York City which was largely Catholic, a difference that was accentuated both in and out of our home. Identification was reinforced by the age of 5 through the anti-Semitic responses of my peers. The church was across the street from the building in which we lived. During the week, a rough harmony existed with my non-Jewish companions at play but Sunday was the time to be called kike, hebe, and dirty Jew, labels I did not comprehend but which taught me that I was different and simply didn't belong. Combined with my early awareness

and religious involvement, the significance of these encounters with prejudice offer another avenue to my entrée into the psychology of religion. The joining of these experiential strands, as is shortly evidenced, quite likely played a key role in my choice of religion and prejudice as variables to be studied and understood.

Unhappily, I encountered versions of such reactions throughout my life: in the army, high school, graduate school, job-hunting, my first teaching position, and not too many years ago in my psychology of religion labors. I'm convinced that most of those who acted in this manner were simply naïve and probably not consciously aware of the meaning of their actions and comments. Fortunately, such expressions seem to have gone out of style, or, as my paranoia says, went underground. In sum, whether my faith orientation was positive or negative, the foregoing always let me know who and what I was religiously and culturally.

Inasmuch as more was likely involved, I offer a broader sifting of intellectual propensities from early life that surely continued to influence me. Again, the egotistic nature of these rambblings and struggles is personally troubling and I hope they do not alienate readers.

## **Some Nonreligious Propensities**

If I had a major inclination from early childhood on it was being interested in too many things. This was buttressed by a tendency to read everything in sight. For a while this was aided by an uncle who owned a small bookstore and a grandfather who ran a candy store with many magazines. When I was almost 9 years old, my family moved from New York City to the relatively small community of Long Beach, New York with its winter population of 3,000 to 5,000 people. It possessed a public library which became indispensable to me. I was, however, restricted to the children's section until I reached the age of 13. Saturday mornings were taken up by a librarian who discussed books with the children. These talks were well-meaning but boring. The chief librarian, Miss Johns, a formidable gray-haired dreadnaught enforced the age limit and actively discouraged us juniors from sitting and reading in the adult section.

In this fairly small town, differences were somewhat muted but still noticeable. From my current vantage point, this seemed to have been a major characteristic of the 1930s. The community was overwhelmingly Jewish, Italian, and Irish, with the last two groups obviously being Catholic. There were few Protestants and they were somewhat mysterious to us as they attended a "People's Church" which was out of the religious mainstream. I clearly remember discussions among the Catholic and Jewish boys as we pooled our ignorance regarding those "outsiders." Open bigotry was, however, confined to a small group of individuals at the bottom of the economic and educational ladder. As children and early adolescents, friendships were primarily within one's religious group but there was an easy intermixing across faith lines. It did not take much for individual antipathy to bring broader differences to the fore but such expressions were normally suppressed. I was always very sensitive

to such ideas and worked hard to counter them. Even with the very few African Americans who resided in town, I socialized with ease and cannot remember any of my friends or acquaintances doing the same. This was not popular in my home. One of my Black friends protected me against an older bully who lived across the street from our house. Unfortunately, his family left town after a short time.

I read prodigiously about electricity and science. Who can forget those wonderful books, *The Sky for Sam* and *The Earth for Sam*? I still have a copy of the latter. Astronomy took over and by thirteen I had a collection of popular works on the topic plus a small telescope which I still value. Knowing more than my science teacher in this area was not greeted kindly, for in my immaturity I did not know when to keep my mouth shut in class, an inclination I probably still possess. This was part of a broader social ineptness. By the fourth grade I was an assistant to the school librarian and had fantasies of becoming one myself. I took every opportunity to sit and read in the library. Although science dominated my choices, I went through a stage of fascination with Bible stories.

My main interests were expressed in various ways. Radio attracted me and I collected and classified wire, resistors, capacitors, condensers, and old tubes from discarded radios. I even built a crystal set which for all practical purposes was nonfunctional. Concurrently, model planes were constructed from well-marked balsa wood. To these activities were added a small garden plot. This family farmer then raised peas, beans, and corn along with flowers. When I discovered minute clams and gastropods at the bottom of deep holes in our sandy soil, I collected them assiduously along with books, baseball, war, American history, and boxing cards.

Stereotypically, every Jewish family is assumed to have a violin and we passed that test. Parental pressures had me taking music lessons by the age of ten. Although I learned to read music and played in orchestras and bands from elementary grades to college, I was greatly handicapped by two things: my musical “ear” was constructed of tin, and the presence of a brother whose musical skills and sensitivity were exceptional. I liked music and tried one instrument after another, but I was the pupil in music classes who was indelicately told to “shut up” during collective singing efforts. My lack of skill, however, was appreciated by two music teachers. One instructed me in the snare drum using drumsticks and a plywood drum pad; the other saw a tall thin adolescent and made me a bass drummer in the high school band. In both instances, tonal discrimination and sensitivity were unnecessary.

## Adolescence

I always had to be doing something. From age 16 to 18, summers and Christmas time were spent carrying mail and practicing on a trumpet rented from the high school, with of course, a mute. As much as music meant, the science and age-appropriate radio and electrical readings took first place. Still, after graduating to the adult section of the library, an early read was the six volumes of Graetz’s *History of the Jews*. Judaism and Jewish culture lingered in the back of my mind.

In the course of searching shelves, I found Freud's *Introductory Lectures* and Adler's *Understanding Human Nature* and *Patterns of Neurosis*. These spurred another activity that continued for years, namely outlining books. An elementary psychology course in 1944 stimulated me to carry a pocket-sized notebook in which to write research ideas, something I did for about four years.

## College and Beyond

Graduating high school at sixteen in 1943, I immediately entered the pre-engineering program at the City College of New York. My intention was to become an electrical engineer yet after a year, I decided this lacked the intellectual excitement I desired. I transferred to New York University with a new major in chemistry.

World War II intervened and after a stint in the Army Air Force and Medical Corps with training first to be a medical laboratory technician and then an X-ray technician, I returned to NYU and continued in chemistry for another year. The veteran's bulge closed many classes, forcing me to choose a two-semester offering on the Bible in history and literature. I was completely enthralled by the outstanding professor who taught the course and thus read everything I could on biblical topics. At least once or twice a month I could be found prowling the famous Fourth Avenue book row of forty stores in lower Manhattan. Before long I amassed an impressive library of pertinent works in the area, many of which I still possess.

Taking two courses in psychology and helping an instructor who was working for his doctorate was also very interesting and I shifted my major to psychology, emphasizing experimental work, measurement, and statistics. With the end of my undergraduate career in 1949, I looked toward graduate school. My girl friend lived in south Chicago near the University of Chicago but a spark of momentary wisdom told me to pick a nearby institution outside of Chicago. Accepted by a number of schools I selected Purdue because of its experimental and industrial programs. It was a fortuitous choice for my fiancée visited me 2 months after the Fall semester began. Her strong recommendation was to get my Master's degree and then work for her father as a liquor salesman. Our relationship ended immediately.

The American educational system involves continuing assessments. Testing and grading was endemic on all levels. Looking back, my view is that I always performed adequately without being greatly stressed. In general, I believe that I was often intellectually lazy for my level of achievement improved greatly when the pressure was on. This emanated from both external and internal sources. Familial expectations were not to be taken lightly. Although my father only went to the eighth grade, he was extremely intelligent as I found out when, as part of a graduate course requirement, I administered the Stanford-Binet intelligence test to him. My mother graduated from high school and nursing school to become a registered nurse. Neither accepted a low level of academic accomplishment from me. Their hope and that of other relatives was that I would eventually become a physician. When I pursued incompatible collegiate directions, they reluctantly surrendered their medical dreams.

My remembrance of other external spurs to achievement emphasize competition. When placed in such situations, I became a driven competitor, compulsively dedicated to learning the necessary material. The outcomes were always heartening. As I advanced through school, more and more courses interested me, particularly if they contained physical and biological content. The outcome was a Master of Science in 1950 and a PhD in 1952.

Other influences from the past remained. I had more friends from chemistry than psychology. My graduate assistantship for 2 years was in voice science and emphasized the physics, physiology of speech and hearing. Most of the research in which I participated dealt with communication in extremely noisy environments.

Speculating on my returning to “hard science” topics now seems to have conditioned my overall research perspective in the psychology of religion which was still in the future. I have always been fearful that what I might do would not be scientifically stringent enough. Frequently, I demanded replication and cross-validation of data. In like manner, I desired exhaustive surveys of the relevant literature. Over the years, a few editors scolded me for unreasonable “pebble-picking.” Efforts to relax this propensity have not been very successful. My nagging expectation is that someone will find that I have missed a crucial work. Distinguishing the necessary from its periphery is not simple.

Graduate school was a time of intellectual maturation germane to my later orientation to the psychology of religion. I was exposed to Aquinas, Hume, and Marx and more current thinkers such as Ashley Montagu and C. Wright Mills. My friends, virtually all of whom were not Jewish or self-identified as Christian, read and argued philosophy, theology, and social-religious issues. I became acquainted with a world I never realized could exist. We were all veterans and took everything seriously. My verbal skills, particularly for debating, developed considerably; however, I still had much to learn with regard to social maturity.

In 1950, research on religion entered the picture through a friend who needed a thesis for his Master’s degree. He had transferred from physics to education. Although not Jewish, he and I were both quite aware of prejudice and discrimination on the Purdue campus. I was already explicitly motivated toward social psychology and my Master’s problem concerned group influences on individual judgment. After reading Allport and Kramer’s (1946) article on religion and prejudice, we thought of following it up by assessing these variables among the faculty. Because of his affiliation with education we felt this focus would be appropriate. Unhappily, for him, the education faculty proved to be both the most religious and biased of all the departments studied. His committee did not appreciate his findings but awarded him the Master’s and terminated him from the education program. Fortunately, he was immediately accepted by psychology and continued work on religion and prejudice through to his doctorate. I attribute my entrance into the psychology of religion to this work but that may not be the entire story. Interesting as this research was, I moved on to other things. My doctoral dissertation concerned the correlates and effects of delayed speech feedback, a topic undoubtedly well buried in some psychological archive.

## **Time to Begin Working- A Job History**

Job hunting now took precedence and a number of possibilities soon appeared. One that appealed was at Pennsylvania State University. This concerned psychological and physiological responses under high-level noise conditions. After being interviewed for this position at the 1952 Midwestern Psychological Association Convention by a famous psychologist, the chair of the department at Purdue took me aside and recommended I withdraw from consideration because of a strong anti-Semitic attitude on the part of my interviewer. I should note that the chair was an ex-Southern Baptist minister who strongly rejected bigotry. I decided, however, to follow this further and the chairman in Pennsylvania sent out a physicist who stated that they wanted me to take the position and work with him. This fellow was a convert from Judaism to Christianity who confirmed the prevalence of anti-Semitism in the university and community. Happily, while we were sitting near my office, a phone call came from the Human Resources Research Center at Randolph Field, Texas offering me a position in the Combat Crew Training Research Laboratory. After my visitor left with an indefinite response from me, I gave Penn State 4 days to confirm an official appointment. When no response came by day four, I accepted the Texas job and notified the Pennsylvania people of my action. Interestingly, their position was taken by a Jewish applicant from the University of Illinois. The level of anti-Semitism was such that he returned to Illinois after one semester at Penn State.

Texas was clearly the wisest choice I ever made as it eventuated in a marriage that at this date has lasted fifty eight years. Religion put in an appearance as my wife and all her family were strongly Orthodox Jewish refugees from Hitler's Germany. They lost many relatives in the Holocaust. Our home continued their Orthodox tradition and I slowly with limits conformed ritualistically.

My new job entailed research on bombing performance in the Korean war in relation to interphone communications. Flying in B-29s was both boring and sometimes almost too exciting. It was an experience quite different from anything I encountered previously or since.

After a year and a half, a former professor offered me a much better paying position with the Special Devices Center of the Office of Naval Research at Sands Point, Long Island, New York. Marriage ensued and we were off to territory much more familiar to me than the South.

Working with naval gunnery, vertical takeoff aircraft, and air simulation and procedures training left something to be desired, so after another year and a half, I searched for a teaching position and received a number of offers. One important goal was eventually to return to Colorado where I had been stationed during my army days. I therefore accepted the position that was farthest west and ended up in Topeka, Kansas at Washburn University. Topeka was also home to the Menninger Foundation and there were opportunities galore to undertake research with undergraduates. Many topics interested me such as suggestibility, mathematical-verbal ability differences, hostility and anxiety measurement, and so on. Opportunities to work with Menninger's and the Topeka State Hospital arose and among these

was associating with Paul Pruyser and Dr. Karl Menninger, both of whom were interested in psychology and psychiatry in relation to religion. Dr. Karl, as he was known, sent me a number of short memos requesting information usually on psychology and religion topics. When I saw the large K at the bottom of these missives I quickly searched for the answer. Dr. Karl terrified me. He was a tall man with a reputation for swift negative action toward those he did not like. I had a few opportunities to observe such behavior. He was a power and he knew it. I was very pleased to become a favorite which meant being on my intellectual toes for rapid responses to his queries. I also joined the regularly offered seminar in psychiatry and religion at the Foundation. This stimulated my return to research on religion and prejudice. In addition, I became a fairly popular speaker on the topic at local churches.

I must mention another psychiatrist who wrote on psychoreligious topics, namely Joseph Noshpitz, editor of the multi-volume *Handbook of Child Psychiatry* plus other significant works in this area. He became a close friend and godfather of our first son. A memorial volume honoring his work and offering many previously unpublished papers, some dealing with religion, has just been published (Sklarew & Sklarew, 2011).

Bigotry was evident at Washburn which had been a Congregationalist institution before its transformation into a municipal university. The president was previously a Methodist missionary and seemed to be an open and accepting individual, but a number of his older professors clearly displayed their biases. I was one of two Jewish faculty and was made very aware of this fact.

In our earlier work on religion and prejudice (Struening & Spilka, 1952), we confirmed Allport and Kramer's findings, but, in the process noted a curvilinear relationship between the principal variables. Respondents who never attended church were least prejudiced closely followed by those present nine or more times weekly implying that the most religious and least religious might have something in common. The most prejudiced were those who went to church three times a month with others who attended one, two, and four times monthly being essentially equivalent in ethnocentrism. Additional study while at Washburn verified this finding. Interestingly, as I look back, I am surprised that we never compared the two least prejudiced groups. It would probably not have involved faith comparisons, but it might have taken us away from my main concern, the religion-prejudice association. The obvious presence of bigotry at Washburn with myself as the real outsider constituted my primary motivation for continuing the work. The high level of religiousness that also characterized the staff and students further seemed to me a way of possibly embarrassing certain hypocrites on the faculty. My department chair never voiced an objection to my work nor did I hear any sour notes from others who knew what I was doing. I further received emotional support and strong approval from a number of the older liberal students who had been in service during World War II. A professor of law and another from political science were also quite positive toward my project.

This search for significant core variables led to the study of God concepts, a topic that was virtually absent from the literature. Local ministers were quite willing to help me obtain data through adult Sunday school classes. In general, they were delighted to receive such information about their parishioners. Many of the latter completed a wide variety of measures of personality and social outlooks. Utilizing

factor analysis and a forced choice Q-sort approach for the God concepts, scales were developed suggesting different descriptive patterns for religious prejudiced versus religious unprejudiced respondents. This work was continued and published a few years after I left Washburn (Spilka, Armatas, & Nussbaum, 1964; Spilka & Reynolds, 1965).

Periodically, talks were given to the Washburn faculty and administration on the scholarly work being done on campus and through the good offices of my department chair I was invited to contribute. I presented a history of the religion-prejudice issue and the details of my studies and findings. Everyone played the appropriate professional role but later, indirect feedback suggested some unhappiness on the part of a few of my listeners. The only ones in the general audience who wanted to discuss this line of work were supportive associates who were pleased to get it out in the open.

## **On to the University of Denver**

In 1957 after two years at Washburn, a position opened up at the University of Denver and I eagerly took advantage of this opportunity to return to Colorado and its beautiful country and climate. A new life lay ahead.

Between 1956 and 1960, my wife and I had three children in the order of boy, girl, boy. Born 2 years apart the first two chose August 10 to put in an appearance but number three decided not to wait and arrived 6 days earlier on August 4. A graduate student friend helped us obtain housing near the university and it was uphill from that time on. Our next-door neighbor was a graduate student in psychology and a few years later I had the pleasure of directing his dissertation.

The University of Denver was in the throes of changing from an “old boys club” to a truly scholarly institution. It continued with its original identification with the Methodist church but following World War II, compulsory chapel disappeared although it was still available through an official chaplain. Interestingly, this gentleman was both a minister and a psychologist. All chancellors from 1880 to 1967 were Methodist clergy or active lay Methodists. The chancellor who took over in 1953 let it be known that research was a prime criterion for pay raises, promotions, and tenure. After being interviewed by the psychology faculty and chair, I met the chancellor and apparently using all of the right words, was immediately hired. For a number of years, we had an ambivalent relationship as I became an activist president of the American Association of University Professors chapter. I had earlier been elected to this same position at Washburn. One project that distressed the administration was a study I conducted on pay and promotion for women faculty. This clearly demonstrated a pattern of discrimination which I later discovered had become official policy through the Board of Trustees in 1915. It was now informally practiced. Next came my election as president of the University Senate, a body consisting of faculty and administrators that normally had three do-nothing meetings a year. I held eleven and we rewrote the senate constitution and involved ourselves in a number of liberal but administratively irritating issues.



## **A Momentary Digression**

My compulsive, and again, rather driven, administrative manner soon extended beyond the university. As I settled in at Denver, as most psychologists do, I became involved in the state (Colorado, CPA) and regional professional (Rocky Mountain Psychological Association, RMPA) organizations. First, I served in 1965 as program chair of RMPA which then included six western states. Instead of seeking papers solely from within the region, I expanded our horizons to include the eight adjacent states. This approach to a total of fourteen states got the attention of psychologists from coast to coast and at the annual convention, attendance more than tripled and even appealed to a number of European visitors. The usual pattern of thirty to fifty papers expanded to well over one hundred offerings. Letters to friends brought in some nationally known speakers and scholars from well outside our area. Two years later I was elected president of this regional group. That same year I was also chosen president of the CPA. Aggressive participation in national and international bodies resulted in my selection as vice-president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) after the unexpected death of its vice-president. In the mid-1980s, I was elected president of Division 36 (Psychology of Religion) of the American Psychological Association. Despite further approaches to run for office in a few other groups, I felt I had done more than my duty and declined. To have earned the respect and trust of colleagues in this manner was very gratifying.

## **Back to DU**

The University of Denver, or as it was colloquially known, DU, had an open and inviting atmosphere. I saw opportunity everywhere. The teaching load was heavy, however, I was energized and over however & forty years later when I was able to read the chairman's annual reports about me I found that he was delighted by my industrious compulsiveness. Each year I worked with ten to twelve graduate students on Master's theses and doctoral dissertations. In almost all instances, I provided their research problems. Because my little notebook from years past contained some good ideas, I was besieged by students wanting to work with me and later found out that the department chair informed many that I had too many students and that they should find another advisor. I did feel a great deal of pressure but simply did not know limits and internally chastised myself for an inability to say no. Everything in psychology interested me. Although I was not oriented toward clinical work, I sponsored studies on the criminally insane at a state mental hospital, physiological concomitants of manifest hostility and anxiety, assimilative and disowning projection, and majority and minority delinquents. Much of the research combined classical learning and perception with personality and social psychology hence I was further involved in work on the MMPI Hysteria-Psychasthenia Dimension and learning and Critical Flicker Fusion under stress, nonintellectual

correlates of academic achievement among Mexican-American secondary school students, mathematical-verbal ability differentials as a function of situational anxiety and semantic generalization and manifest anxiety. The topic of acquiescent and social desirability response sets concerned me because of my reliance on objective tests and a number of efforts were undertaken to explore this domain.

An interesting and unexpected possibility in the early 1960s was an offer to become chair of the sociology department. I declined this without a moment's hesitation. At the time, the then-chairman of sociology had requested that we work together on a social problems text. This eventually came to naught as this grandfatherly gentleman had never published anything in his long professional life and though I completed all of my chapters, he was unable to do more than a few of his.

Prejudice was not an issue at DU, however, slowly it began to creep back into my research and a student and I examined perceptual selectivity, memory, and anti-Semitism (Pulos & Spilka, 1961). I was soon involved with the Colorado State Civil Rights Commission and the Denver Commission on Human Relations.

Four more studies ensued in an effort to return to my earlier interest in understanding the kind of personal religion that allowed bigotry and the form that opposed it. First, a student and I followed up my earlier work with God concepts utilizing a factorial approach, and three concept patterns emerged (Spilka & Reynolds, 1965). Religious-unprejudiced persons manifested two images. One was of a deity that was close and punitive; the second revealed a loving and supporting God. The implication seemed to be that one opposed prejudice when the opposite outlook might elicit divine punishment. In the other instance, a loving God simply countered negative social orientations. Religious-prejudiced individuals further perceived God as distant and uninvolved in human affairs, making bias religiously irrelevant.

Obviously, I was dealing with an emotionally sensitive topic and this became evident when I co-ordinated my research and ideas with those of a senior professor in philosophy who was also an ordained minister. Never one to shy away from possible conflict, he had developed a novel framework for conceptualizing faith. Working with a Master's candidate whose father had been a well-known cleric in Denver, we assessed personal religion with the new forms along with prejudice among the DU faculty. Using different instruments, this was basically a repeat of the work Struening and I did at Purdue University (Struening & Spilka, 1952). The data were collected, analyzed, and presented as a Master's thesis (Fredregill, 1962). Shortly afterwards I received a request from the college dean to come to his office. He had heard about the research and thesis and was very concerned that the information might get to the newspapers and cause difficulty for the university. He ordered all copies of the thesis be sequestered in the supposedly secret "Delta" section of the university library only to be released after permission had been obtained from his office. Although some copies were placed in the library, at least two remained in the student's and my hands.

By the mid-1960s, my work came to the attention of some of the faculty at the Iliff School of Theology, a Methodist seminary on the same campus as the University of Denver. For a number of years I was denoted an adjunct professor of psychology

and interacted with many of Iliff's fine thinkers. Still, I was informed by friends that a few held anti-Semitic ideas but I never encountered such. Most were quite the opposite.

## Personally Recognizing the Psychology of Religion

I still did not regard myself as a psychologist of religion, yet I was increasingly looking at the literature in this area. I judged it as generally naïve, simplistic, and poorly designed and analyzed. The early work mixed theology and psychology, however, a growing sophistication was evident and new journals associating social science and religion were appearing. By the early 1960s, the quality of the research and publications was rapidly improving. Happily, I became acquainted with scholars such as Paul Johnson, Walter Houston Clark, Ralph Burhoe, and Jim Dittes, all of whom were the founders of the nascent psychology of religion. Dittes especially bridged the old and new schools of thought and his research and writing in the second edition of *The Handbook of Social Psychology* formalized this field for mainstream psychology (Dittes, 1969). As editor of the journal *Zygon*, Burhoe proved to be a brilliant theorist integrating scientific and religious ideas. Johnson was a truly decent model with a broad perspective in which one could argue that theology took precedence over science. Clark was a sensitive experimenter with a sympathetic eye toward both religion and psychology. His possible weakness was an attachment to the Boston Red Sox. All of these fine professionals influenced me to commit to the psychology of religion. I must also include Charles Glock with his research on *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism*. I had some questions about this study but it aroused many people to the way social science and psychology were attempting to understand the roles religion was playing in life. I made no distinction among these fields. Solid research was all that counted. It is impossible for me to list all of those in sociology, anthropology, and the psychology of religion whom I have admired as people and scholars.

From approximately 1966 to 1975, I conducted research on a wide variety of psychological and educational topics, only a few of which dealt with religion. My major effort during this period involved a large research grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to study alienation and achievement among Oglala Sioux school children on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota (Spilka, 1970). While carrying out this project, I lived at a late nineteenth century Catholic monastery and school, Holy Rosary Mission, with Jesuits and Franciscan nuns. This was named Red Cloud School after the great Oglala war chief who was buried in the monastery cemetery. Its principal took his doctorate with me. During the course of this work, I was approached by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to become its research director under a special congressional appointment. I immediately declined as I simply did not want to leave Denver. This feeling has been repeatedly confirmed. Because of these undertakings, three major universities brought up the possibility of my joining their faculties with appointments in cross-cultural education.

Although flattered by such interests, I preferred to continue teaching and research in what I considered a wonderful educational setting.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s my energies were directed toward another federal contract focusing again on school children but this time with cancer (Spilka, Zwartjes, & Zwartjes, 1991; Zwartjes, Spilka, Zwartjes, Heideman, & Cilli, 1979). I was able to include a study on the coping role of faith for these children and their families. These commitments consumed most of my research time, however, I still worked on a variety of other research questions.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the frequency of such involvement increased greatly and for the first time, I began to think of myself as “specializing” in the psychology of religion. I knew of the growing identification of a field with this focus yet I still largely considered myself a social psychologist primarily concerned with prejudice. That, however, was changing. More and more my interests in religious/spiritual issues expanded to include studies on faith and death and dying, sexual behavior, religious experience, and prayer (Spilka, Brown, & Cassidy, 1993; Spilka, Ladd, McIntosh, Milmoie, & Bickel, 1996; Spilka, Spangler, & Rea, 1981; Spilka, Spangler, Rea, & Nelson, 1981; Wulf Prentice, Hansum, Ferrar, & Spilka, 1984). A central topic in social psychology, namely attribution theory, seemed to have much potential so this was explored (Spilka & Schmidt, 1983; Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1985). More recently, there seemed to be a need to understand and unite a scattered literature on prayer hence work on this subject is still in process (Ladd & Spilka, 2002, 2006). Again, my problem is that too much in this domain attracts me.

Unfortunately this viewpoint eventuates in a scattered quality to what is done. The need for co-ordination and connection is abundantly evident. In part, to provide direction for such synchronization, Richard Gorsuch, Ralph Hood, and I produced a scientifically oriented text for students in 1985 (Spilka, Hood, & Gorsuch, 1985). This is currently in its fourth edition (Hood, Hill, & Spilka, 2009). In addition, various handbooks and encyclopedias are being published and I have been fortunate to participate in overviews of large research issues such as religion and the mental health of women (Bridges & Spilka, 1992), God concepts (Spilka, 1999, 2002), religion and the family (McIntosh & Spilka, 1995), religion in adulthood (Spilka, 1993), and ritual and prayer (Spilka, 2005). The volume by Pargament (1997) on *The Psychology of Religion and Coping* is an outstanding example of this genre. Such summary works are invaluable means of organizing knowledge about specific topics and problems. We need more such efforts to keep everyone up to date on this rapidly growing discipline.

By the early 1980s, the psychology of religion had clearly become my main interest. I was particularly impressed by its many ramifications. Here was a subject with worldwide significance. Taking many forms, its apparent universality combines with roles not only in personal life but in virtually all aspects of interpersonal, social, and cultural existence. Anthropological and biological scholars are advancing their views, not a few of which are quite informative although sometimes negative (Atran, 2002; Boyer, 2001; Dawkins, 2006; Guthrie, 1993). Criticality from science should not be threatening as it opens doors for more rigorous understanding and questioning. This may be best comprehended from the standpoint of the philosophy of religion.

Stephen Jay Gould's principle of non overlapping Magisteria (Gould, 1999) has great appeal but its limits are poorly defined and unclear. Because such idealistic generalities are unlikely to gain acceptance, battles will continue to be fought over territorial pronouncements. Neither religionists nor scientists are likely to cede ground. For myself, the question must be, "Is it objectively researchable?" For example, we are unable objectively to resolve the issue of God's existence. Still, we can study its assertion as belief and attitude. The ultimate answer obviously lies outside psychology and science.

Working scientifically within the psychology of religion is idealistically independent of personal feelings but reality says this assertion is not true. Neither science nor religion offers warrant for negativism although some have taken that perverse avenue. I am not ready to indict faith as I am those who display dehumanized thinking and behavior.

Reflecting on where I fit relative to the psychology of religion, I must recognize that the field seems to be moving past me to the perspectives and strengths of a new generation. The process is conceptually and methodologically slow. Modern psychology keeps opening up vistas that create ever greater demands for theory and research. Much may have been undertaken in, for example, developmental psychology but this work is clearly not coherently or systematically organized. Individual studies abound with serious gaps among them. We lack programmatic work that is orderly and directed. The relatively new field of neuropsychology has some outstanding thinkers looking at faith and neurophysiology. That this work needs replication cannot be repeated often enough. At this point in my life, I must confront the reality of slowly becoming an outside observer. The hard work is for younger creative scholars who are aggressively enriching the psychology of religion. A new generation is taking over. Even though I struggle to keep up with the literature, my interests have shifted to the study of molecular biology and genetics. In the late 1990s, I was fortunate to be approached by a group of behavioral geneticists relative to the possible role of genetics in religious commitment (D'Onofrio et al. 1999). Along with auditing a half dozen courses in genetics, mostly for my own benefit, I have done some writing on this likelihood.

The psychology of religion, for many decades, has always been more than my age-colleagues and I emphasized. Possibly largely from ignorance, I have never felt comfortable with the clinical-counseling aspect of our field, except in the most abstract and distant sense. Approaches from psychoanalysis, Jungian analytics, and psychiatry are interesting but in essence alien to me. I tend to see such frequently bordering on philosophy and mythology. I admit to lacking the sensitivity and openness such work requires. The "hard-nosed" science I crave is simply absent. Finally, there is the matter of whether my personal religious past and changing framework over time has affected the way I perceive what I have done. I suspect it has, but again I must emphasize that my religious/spiritual philosophy demands I attempt to maintain a rigorous scientific approach to the field. There is always room for doubts and questions. In general, I find no necessary or inherent conflict between religion and science.

## Past and Present-Speculations and Recommendations

In 1997, I retired from the University of Denver but still read, study, and write in the psychology of religion. Some additional “free” time has allowed me to do something I would recommend to all others, retired or not. For those who have been affiliated with or live near colleges and universities, my hope is that they keep their minds active by auditing courses taught by knowledgeable faculty. These are frequently free if one is “older.” Simply put, there is a fascinating world out there with which to stimulate one’s intellect. Don’t let it simply pass by.

When I look back, even to the time of early adolescence, I was always aware of the tenuous nature and limited span of life. I did not consciously associate this then nor do I now with an interest in religion. This fascination with the subject moved me to establish a course on the psychology of death and dying in the 1970s that spurred a fair amount of research on its relation to faith. Concurrently, editorial involvement began with the journal *Omega* that specializes in the area.

With the passage of the years, there has developed a growing pressure to use, not waste, time. I actually feel guilty if I relax. The University of Denver was a boon to me in this regard. Even though I was extremely busy with teaching and directing theses and dissertations along with the usual committee assignments, a year after I arrived in Denver, I decided to study mathematics, meeting all course requirements. Twenty-eight such courses up to the Master’s level were completed. I even had a thesis problem dealing with Sturm’s and Budan’s theorems but in 1967 my wife quite correctly said, “You have a family.” Four years later, as she was working for her degree and our children were in school, she needed a minor and I suggested geology with the stipulation I would take the classes with her. She completed the necessary work while I finished thirteen courses. This interest shaded into paleontology, meaning for my amateurish efforts, fossil hunting. A number of my finds now reside in museums. Over the following years I tried other classes in English and religious studies until retirement. Since that time I have refreshed myself with work in mathematical physics, organic chemistry, and most recently FOURTEEN courses in biology.

Permit me some “cantankerous observations.” I would like to recommend to readers that retirement does not mean one’s mind should be closed and thinking ceased. It is not merely that the psychology of religion continues to increase in ingenious and thoughtful ways with which I try to keep up, but I would like to believe that age by itself should not confine one to a physical and mental rocking chair. Experience is not to be shunted aside; perspectives gained over many years can contribute to progress. There is a lot more in life to learn about and enjoy.

## A Closing Perspective on the Psychology of Religion

The psychology of religion suffers from a very common problem that plagues study in psychology and all the social and behavioral sciences. There is a paucity of researchers who extensively explore problem areas in a thorough, orderly, and

sophisticated manner. Ralph Hood, in my judgment, is the premier scholar in our field to have done this. His work on religious experience must stand as a model to be emulated by others. Kevin Ladd appears to be taking similar steps relative to prayer (Hood, 1995).

These recommendations open another door, namely the need to thoroughly know the literature. I could not guess how many manuscripts I have read for journals in our field, in which the authors demonstrate that if something were done prior to the preceding decade, it was apparently not worth examining. What gems are overlooked! I cannot emphasize enough to the upcoming generation the worth, significance, skill, and scholarship of thinkers such as Kenneth Pargament, David Wulff, Laurence Brown, Newton Malony, Peter Benson, Michael Donahue, and the editor of this volume, Jacob Belzen. My bias motivates me to single out for special consideration, Richard Gorsuch, whose rigorous mind has attacked and analyzed so many of the difficult problems and issues that face our field (Gorsuch, 1984, 1988, 2002). Until fairly recently, our knowledge of progress among European researchers has been pitiful. To be ignorant of the contributions of Helmut Reich, Kalevi Tamminen, Nils Holm, and their ilk must deny the appellation, educated, to many of our colleagues. I hope I will be forgiven for missing so many others I admire for their seminal contributions. The core point is that the psychology of religion is growing rapidly in complexity and those just mentioned are among the giants whose work should and must become known and familiar to those who follow us.

A serious question then is just what is the nature of the psychology of religion? Definitions are guides. They focus our efforts toward certain goals. Too often they are habitually treated as deference to custom, expected rituals, exercises, or introductory statements to be offered and habitually ignored. It is easy to say of our field that it is psychology applied to religion but such vagueness is aversive and self-defeating. On a more concrete, scientific plane, faith becomes belief, behavior, and experience. These commonly find expression in individual development and coping actions. Like most in the field, I have too casually moved in and out of these areas and worked with topics that barely sampled these domains. Their explicit comprehensive integration has yet to be effected but some edited works survey all three of these realms, both in general and with regard to major issues such as conversion (Hood, 1995; Malony & Southard, 1992). We need more such co-ordination. Plaudits should be directed at the editors of handbooks and encyclopedias, especially those who have contributors delve deeply into their topics (Paloutzian & Park, 2005; Roehlkepartain, King, Wagener, & Benson, 2006). In any event, my orientation recommends getting the psychology of religion accepted into the mainstream of psychology per se by undertaking theoretical efforts such as one finds in the *Psychological Review* and systematic research overviews of the caliber published in the *Psychological Bulletin*. We need to bring the work published in our own journals to the attention psychologists outside our still relatively small group in Division 36 of the APA. Historically, modern psychology has not been congenial to religion, a bias that needs to be countered (Cummings, O'Donohue, & Cummings, 2009).

In these pages, among other things, I have offered my perspectives on my life, work, and the psychology of religion. I feel that one can only be optimistic

regarding the future potential of the last as a branch of mainstream psychology. For over a century fine scholars and researchers from James, Hall, and Starbuck to Gorsuch, Hood, Pargament, and Wulff among so many others have given us much to feel positive about the future of the field. Fine people keep appearing. Who can ask for more?

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## Chapter 14

# From the History of Religion to the Psychology of Religion\*

Daniel Anders Hjalmar Sundén



### Educational Development and on to the Faculty of Philosophy in Stockholm

My father, a lieutenant colonel, was transferred several times, so I spent my childhood in various garrison towns. That had advantages and disadvantages. (As does everything, I learned that while still a child. When playing ball I lost the sight in my right eye; I had to lie in bed for a long time, and we hoped that it would heal. I've always had trouble with it, but on the other hand, I didn't have to do any military service, which in turn was an advantage.) I started high school in Skövde, another

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garrison town, where we had lived since 1916; the school didn't offer Latin, however, so I had to make up for that later.

In about 1925 our family moved to Stockholm, where I finished college in 1927 and went to the university. (In those days Stockholm's university was still called the Hochschule.) We had very good teachers at college, especially for Swedish and literary history, later also for philosophy and history. I also liked chemistry, which is a subject that can also be very useful for psychology.

My studies at the university began with the history of literature, and I really received excellent instruction. After the first year, theoretical philosophy was added to the curriculum. We were lucky to have a very clever professor, who excelled at teaching the art of dialectics. In any case, I certainly became very dialectical, and acquired a certain contempt for philosophy, because I understood the artifices one could get up to with this line of business. But the training in the subject, also from an historical viewpoint, was good!

My third subject was the history of religions. Here I wrote about Taoism: I collected a great deal of French-language literature, a whole series of great works. I hoped to continue by studying Chinese, but things turned out differently.

## Transfer to Uppsala and Beginnings in Theology

By 1930 I had obtained a Bachelor's degree in three subjects: history of literature, philosophy, and history of religions. I then transferred to Uppsala, to study theology. There it took me 2 years to study what others do in 5 years; still, in all subjects I was given the highest grades that have ever been awarded in Sweden in theology – Old Testament exegesis, New Testament exegesis, ecclesiastical history, history of religions, ethics – always the highest grades. It was only in dogmatics that I didn't get the highest grade, but a very good one all the same. (Actually, I've always despised dogmatics.) I studied practical theology for 1 week only, in fact, but I got a very good grade for it all the same.

In the history of religions I attended lectures given by Tor Andrae (1885–1946), then already in Stockholm. (He was my uncle, my mother's brother, but he never helped me or let me take advantage of our family relationship! My old friend Geo Widengren (1907–1996), my fellow student under Andrae and also his successor, can testify to this.) Andrae gave very good lectures, very interesting and subtly formulated. Many students had difficulty following him, but because I had already studied the history of religions to such an extent, I didn't have any problem understanding his lectures. Moreover, his book on the question of religious predisposition is very interesting for the psychology of religion (Andrae, 1932; cf. also Andrae, 1926). He was very important to my development; later on I did research on the same subject. (There is a chapter about this in, among other publications, *Religionen och Rollerna* [Religion and Roles], which was unfortunately omitted in the German translation [*Die Religion und die Rollen*].)

I got my Bachelor's degree in theology in 1932. After that I had to learn to work not only with books, but also with people. I spent 6 months in the small town of

Arboga, where I had been sent by the bishop. There was an old provost, a very talented but headstrong individual: all of the paperwork that wasn't strictly religious yet connected somehow with the business of running the church, he immediately threw into the wastepaper basket. I could easily understand this attitude. I went into the parlor and beseeched him with almost military respect: "Please, Sir, allow me to deal with the papers you've discarded." And in so doing I discovered old people. I knew that a pastor had to visit old people, but everyone told me it wasn't really necessary, because old people no longer have a spiritual life. They just sit there like sticks. So I sat down with these sticks and said, "I see that Uncle is very tired today; I'll sit here with you for a couple of minutes, and come back again in 2 days." I spent about a month like this with all those old men. I understood quite intuitively that they were afraid that I wanted to help them prepare for death. And a young pastor was capable of committing so many stupidities! After 4 weeks, however, they realized that I wasn't dangerous. And after 5 or 6 weeks they were seated on chairs, dressed, something they hadn't done for years. The staff was amazed! And 2 months later they began to ask, "Couldn't we have a worship service together?" "But of course," I replied. Because that had been my resolution: here the initiatives for church services wouldn't come from the pastor, but from the lay people. If they desire it, that's something else; then we'll be happy to hold a worship service. And so I learned how to deal with the elderly. Later I wrote a book on this subject, which is used as a handbook (Sundén, 1964). For 10 years I taught psychology to the directors of homes for the elderly. It was the experience I'd received in Arboga that gave me the basis for doing this. After that learning period in Arboga, I was ordained as a minister in 1933. Since then I have regularly worked as a pastor, but also as a teacher, to earn a living.

## Further Education in France

From Arboga I went first to Strasbourg. The theological faculties at Strasbourg and Uppsala worked together, and the Uppsala faculty sponsored a scholarship to go to Strasbourg. The faculty had a candidate in mind, but he declined the scholarship, so it was suggested that I go instead. (I actually wanted to do something else entirely, namely study Chinese.) I spent the summer of 1931 there. Later on, I went repeatedly to Paris, where I studied exegesis, among other things, and also attended many other lectures on theology. I also studied Semitic languages, with so much success, in fact, that one professor wanted me to change my course of studies to his subject. But I had already made my decision: in Uppsala I wanted to major in "encyclopedia and propedeutics," that is, in philosophy of religion, the history of religions, and the psychology of religion, and to minor in Old Testament exegesis. (In those days one had to have a major and a minor.) I didn't want to change my field any more, although while I was studying in Paris the study regulations had been changed: philosophy of religion as such had been taken out of the curriculum and combined with ethics. (In ethics I had received the highest possible grade, but in spite of that, I didn't want to go on studying it. I was also very good at philosophy: I studied,

among other things, Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* [*Logical Investigations*; Husserl, 1900], and put together an excerpt from it that was later read by all philosophy students, to the extent that no one read the *Logische Untersuchungen* any longer! I have always worked very hard indeed.)

I always wanted to stick to my own chosen subject. From my days in Paris I had an excellent command of French. I had read a lot in French and had noticed that Bergson (1859–1941) had not been correctly understood at all, so I wanted to make him the subject of my dissertation. (Thus it was actually a philosophical study that was part of my major, which was subsequently accepted as belonging to the psychology of religion.) Bergson became the subject of my graduate thesis of 1937 and my doctoral dissertation of 1940 (Sundén, 1940/1947).

In Paris I met Bergson, but only once; it was very interesting. At the time he was quite ill and extremely reluctant to make appointments. When I interviewed him, he thought it would be 6 months before he could give me another appointment. "But I'd like to reserve an hour for you next year." That's what his life was like.

## Studying Psychology (of Religion)

In order to take the higher examination in theology (1937), I had to read a great deal of literature on the psychology of religion: such books as Pratt's *Religious Consciousness* (1920), Leuba's *Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (1925), James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), and many others. The examiner was a very wise man. We took a walk and at some point I asked him, "When are we going to begin?" "Begin?," he asked, "I've already been examining you the whole afternoon. Didn't you realize that?" "Well," I said, "I thought this a rigorous exam!" "It actually was rigorous," he said, "and dangerous too, since you were unaware that you were being tested so thoroughly."

I also studied a lot of general psychology, but in another context. I wanted to become a lector at a college: teacher training was required to do this, and psychology was part of it. (I actually worked as a lector for religious studies and philosophy in Gävle, starting in the autumn of 1939.) I studied psychology in Stockholm under David Katz (1884–1953), who had fled to Sweden to escape the German National Socialists. The exam must have been in 1938.

The essential immersion in psychology came later, however: from 1947 to 1966 I taught psychology at the police academy in Södermalm (Stockholm), at first only taking over a few hours of teaching for a friend who had too much work. After 2 years I changed over completely. There I did my best work in psychology. It was extremely interesting: what can psychology do with statements made in court, maintaining that this or that happened? About what happened in fact, one only has statements. (It's also like this in the psychology of religion: people experience things; statements are made about their experiences.) For 10 years I worked with the most unbelievable cases. And I understood that people can experience the most incredible things perceptually.

For me the police academy was a university of psychology. I read everything I could possibly find about perception and other subjects. And I was able to travel all over, to every possible European library, drawing up reports and compiling lists of books to order. I actually supplied the library of the police academy with reading matter. But I taught and graded papers as well, and that was not all: I also taught female teachers at the nursing school. Furthermore, I was still giving courses in psychology elsewhere. Now I can't imagine how I managed to do it all. For about 20 years I did the work of five people. And I'm still alive (and I even published during this period, which meant burning the midnight oil!).

It was at Katz's bidding that I turned once more to the psychology of religion: when he was looking for a candidate to write a chapter on the psychology of religion for the second edition of his handbook on psychology, he remembered me (probably encouraged to do so by French professors who visited the faculty in Uppsala) and he asked me for such a chapter. I then read everything I could find and wrote an overview of it all (Sundén, 1955). In doing so I noticed, however, that practically nothing new had been published since my student days. (In retrospect I see that the chapter I wrote for Katz was already the prelude to my later role theory, and I also see that my study of Bergson was fundamental in this respect.) For the German translation of the book, however, Katz's widow (who was overseeing the publication) commissioned someone else to write a new chapter on religion and psychology, but the person she asked was not even able to read the older continental psychology of religion (Thouless, 1960). That was a disadvantage, I thought. That chapter I wrote for Katz was probably my first publication in the field of the psychology of religion.<sup>1</sup>

I therefore thought it would be a real challenge to try to develop something new. In the chapter for Katz I had already pointed out the importance of roles, and so I continued in this vein. I had adopted the concept from Kimball Young, from his *Handbook of Social Psychology* (1946). But I didn't want to work with an American understanding of the role concept, because I imagined that sooner or later some fool would present God as the Generalized Other (and this actually happened: Unger, 1976). Thus I adhered to the French concept of role (Rocheblave-Spenlé, 1962) for that very reason: to prevent the biblical God from being described in that way. (Because then one can do this with other religions too, and adjust everything as one sees fit.<sup>2</sup>)

After agreeing to write that chapter for Katz, I probably worked on the book *Religionen och Rollerna* (*Religion and Roles*; Sundén, 1959/1966) for about 8 years, not only at home, but also in various libraries (including a Benedictine monastery in Luxemburg, although I also spent some periods of study in Paris, London, Oxford, and Cambridge).

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<sup>1</sup> In any case, Sundén also wrote an entry called "Religionspsychologie" (Psychology of religion) in an encyclopedia (1943).

<sup>2</sup> This statement seems polemical. The orientation towards a "French" role concept can only have come about later. Certainly the views of such Americans as Newcomb and Sarbin had already been important to Sundén at the time of his work on the first edition of *Religionen och Rollerna* (1959/1966); cf. Belzen (1996).

## My Reasons for Studying Theology

As a youngster, as a child actually, I laughed at the philosophy of religion, and had the feeling that those gentlemen knew nothing about religions and God. God related to children, I felt, but I knew for a fact that He did not take the mistakes out of my workbook. I knew that He was capable of doing everything, yet didn't. I was certainly very realistic. In those days I had the impression that there were actually no adults who were reliable. My parents were very good, but they were not reliable. The only reliable authority in life is God. I already knew that at the age of four or five, and I've remained convinced of it my whole life.

At first I was not committed to the Church, but I was committed to the Christian movement. As a young pastor, I even became the traveling secretary of the "Christian College Movement of Sweden," and I visited all the Swedish colleges.

Studying theology had by no means been my intention. I was interested in literature, which is what I went to study at the university. Studying philosophy and the history of religions, however, sparked my interest in theology: I wanted to acquire a broader scientific basis. To become a pastor had never been my plan either, but during my years as a student, I lost a few close friends early on, through suicide, among other things. I consulted Anna, my later wife, about this, saying that I wanted to become a pastor. We had experienced those deaths as a sign from God, and that was also how we saw my great academic success in theology. I was very grateful for it, and thought it was my duty to spend my life in the service of the Church. At first it was very difficult to decide whether I should seek further academic qualifications. But it did come to this after all, owing in part to my being sent to Strasbourg. (Being appointed the traveling secretary had also been such a sign.)

## The Road to a Professorship

The reactions to my book *Religionen och Rollerna* were mixed, but for the most part positive. (A few systematic theologians were very critical, and one even labeled it "pornography." But many, also outside the academic milieu, thanked me for it.)

Even though I would have liked to return to the university, it was mainly two older theologians in Uppsala who prevented it. After the publication of *Religionen och Rollerna*, however, I was sitting one day with Gustaf Wingren, who held the chair of systematic theology in Lund. He said, "Now you should submit your application for a teaching post at the University of Uppsala. You shouldn't torment yourself any longer because of people who don't understand a thing. You must send in your application." The reaction of the faculty was very kind: they did not even require me to give a trial lecture, because a "master of oral presentation" was coming to the faculty, as Sweden's foremost literary historian said about me. (In fact, I really did succeed in holding an auditorium of some 800 people in thrall, so I believe there must have been some truth in it.) That was in 1964.

Later on, then, old Grønbaeck, a Danish psychologist of religion, wrote to Widengren something along the following lines, “It’s a shame for Sweden that you don’t have Sundén as a professor at your faculty. That must be changed immediately. He is now a member of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion and has given lectures here. The French and Germans agree that he is an outstanding psychologist of religion. You must rectify this situation at once.”<sup>3</sup> And the strange thing was that the then-chancellor of the university, after reading something to this effect, wrote the following to the Parliament, “International opinion supports a Personal Chair for Dr. Sundén, so I hereby request such a position for him.” That, of course, created problems for the Parliament: they didn’t want to establish any new professorships, because that costs money. The parliamentary negotiations were protracted. There were two houses: the first said “Yes” and the second “No,” so they held a joint meeting and took a general vote. Nothing went the way either my opponents or my advocates thought it would, but in the end it was decided (contrary to all expectations and thanks to the votes of the communists!) to make me a professor, starting on July 1, 1967.

I had a lot of work as a professor, teaching not only in Uppsala, but in two other cities as well. And I took great pains to find people who could eventually teach the subject. I was lucky: I had a small flock who in turn all became professors: Owe Wikström, Nils Holm, Thorleif Pettersson, and Thorvald Källstad. (Gustaf Ståhlberg, who likewise belonged to this circle, also became an assistant professor. And I was Sven Stibe’s PhD supervisor.) Moreover, it was in this period that I wrote my book on children and religion. (Examining all the literature on the subject was a difficult task [Sundén, 1970]; you wouldn’t think so, but that book took more time to write than *Religionen och Rollerna!*)

In 1975 my Personal Chair was turned into a permanent Chair in the Psychology of Religion.

## The International Association for the Psychology of Religion

My first contact with the International Association for the Psychology of Religion was probably in 1963, when I presented a paper at a conference in Berlin on “The Task of Contemporary Psychology of Religion: The Facilitation of Empirical Research Through Operationally Defined Concepts.” Grønbaeck, the dean of Ribe Cathedral in Denmark, was elected chairman, and I was vice-chairman from 1969 to 1984.

In Berlin I immediately noticed how much tension there was between the Germans and the French. The secretary-general of the association, Wilhelm Keilbach (1908–1982), had been made a prelate by the Pope, so he was doubtless an important theologian.

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<sup>3</sup>William Grønbaeck (1897–1970) was a theologian. He studied the psychology of religion with Werner Gruehn (1887–1961), and after the reorganization of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion, he was its chairman from 1963 to 1969 (cf. Belzen, 2001, 2004).



The French-speaking contingent (such as Godin, a Jesuit from Brussels, and Salman, a Dominican from Canada) believed him to be their sworn enemy. That was actually not true, but his manner made them think of him in that way. He had certain tactics; for example, I was supposed to give a lecture, and then he suddenly decided that it had to be 10 or 15 min shorter than planned. He also did this to Vergote, who was quite indignant. I laughed, thinking: old teachers should be able to show some flexibility, shouldn't they? Nevertheless, I had understood that such tension could endanger the future of the association, so I thought it very good that Grønbaeck, a Dane, became chairman, because this introduced a neutral note. At first I had the impression that Keilbach acted like a dictator. Later, however, I formed a very different opinion of him. He was a very practical fellow, and sought to raise money for the association from the governments of countries such as Germany. This explained certain of his practices, but the others didn't understand this. When I came to this realization, however, Keilbach and I became good friends. We could work well together, organizing, for example, a very successful conference in Würzburg, with good papers and discussions.

I thought this association important; I considered it vital to have such a European community. That's why I was very upset when a schism came about in Nijmegen. (Vergote comforted me, however, by saying something nice that made me laugh. All the same, it wasn't good; cf. Belzen, 2001, 2004.)

In 1970, when the International Association for the History of Religion met here in Sweden, I tried to persuade the two associations to collaborate: the presidents of the two organizations met at my home, but it didn't bring much. Salman, who spoke during the section of the conference devoted to the psychology of religion, was not very well prepared; on the whole it made a bad impression, and I was very disappointed.

I've organized several conferences with Keilbach, and in 1977 I also succeeded in bringing the Germans from the International Association for the Psychology of Religion to Uppsala. This gave rise to contact with the younger Swedes. In the meantime they wanted to elect me chairman, but I knew that I wouldn't be able to get any public funding from Germany, or at least wouldn't understand such matters as well as Keilbach.

## **On Religion and Religious Experiences**

Religion is an attitude that is dual in nature. One part is humanity, as individuals or a collective; the other part is the totality. In this totality, one can find God, but not without making an effort. One needs help in order to recognize the divine. And this seeing has been made possible by Jesus Christ, among others. It is his words that should be heeded (not so much what theologians and churches have made of them).

Naturally there were and are other religions besides Christianity. They derive from others, for example, from Buddha and his words. They accentuate different things. I consider the words of Buddha to be just as revelatory as the words of Jesus. In principle, neither has priority over the other, but because one always grows up in

a certain tradition, one can hardly be neutral in such matters. I have a friend, a Japanese professor, who is a Buddhist, but also a Christian. He professes both religions, and I believe he is a good Christian. In Niebuhr, an American theologian, we have found a common authority. (We met in Uppsala. The Uppsalians didn't know how to enter into discussion with him, but I got along with him very well. I think that I, too, am a good Christian in the Niebuhrian sense.)

With religious experiences it is, as Scripture says, as though God had paved the way: one is led into it and doesn't have to be afraid. I have often had religious experiences: a feeling that I was being protected, for example, as well as witnessing angelic apparitions, already as a child. (When I was six or seven I once spent a vacation with my mother and grandmother at the house of a pastor. It had a room that was said to be haunted: the first time the pastor's daughter-in-law entered the house, she supposedly saw an old lady standing at the window in that room. My mother and I slept in that very room, and after she had put me to bed, I saw at the door an angel dressed in blue, just as I had seen in a book. I was completely calm: "That's an angel, so there's no danger at all.") Later I often thought about this: the apparition depends on the child. There was a presence (*presentia*), but its effect depended on the child, and it had a beneficial protective effect. It can hardly be ascertained whether it is an effect of our inner activity or whether there is something "outside," but it's not so important to know that. Let's just say that there was something near me, whether personal or impersonal, I couldn't say. But the effect was helpful and protective, because I visualized it as an angel. In the course of my life I have often experienced this *presentia*, but almost never visualized it as an angel. In fact, I've experienced many things, which others have often described, in the words of lay piety, as a miracle. Theologians have destroyed such lay piety: we were a devout people, but now this faith is largely gone, because theologians have driven it away. This hurts me.

## The Future of the Psychology of Religion

The psychology of religion involves psychological issues in all kinds of religions. (By contrast, pastoral psychology usually confines itself to relationships in a smaller circle: a church or a community, for example.) Thus anyone who seeks to practice the psychology of religion must first acquire a sound knowledge of the history of religions; this is really the first prerequisite. The second is that one must also be well versed in modern psychological methods. (One should not be afraid of statistics, for instance, and related subjects. Whatever one's age, one must, if necessary, simply learn such things. But there are, for that matter, more important auxiliary sciences: if one wants to study Zen Buddhism, for example, one would do better to learn Japanese!)

The most important thing, to begin with, is a solid understanding of the great themes in the history of religions: other cultures experience things quite differently and experience completely different things. First one must realize that in other

religions one is dealing with wholly different aspects of reality. Taking this into consideration is more important than knowing about depth psychology (which is probably on the wane anyway, particularly its Jungian variant).

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## Chapter 15

# How and Why I Became Interested in the Psychology of Religion

Antoine Vergote



I was born too early in the twentieth century to be able to acquire a university degree in psychology, for this kind of faculty did not yet exist when I was a university student, either in Louvain or in other European cities. Lack of a formal qualification had not, however, hindered Freud, Piaget, and a number of other eminent psychologists, and it did not prevent me from accepting a nomination in psychology. I was, in fact, not completely unprepared, for at Louvain University, where I carried out my doctoral studies, there was considerable interest in the nascent psychological sciences, particularly in the Faculty of Philosophy. As early as 1920, they were giving full attention to the epistemological questions of perception and of free will, in discussion with positivism and post-Kantian epistemology. Gradually, and especially in the second half of the twentieth century, an increasing number of lectures were devoted to the “depth psychology” of Freud, Jung, Adler, and the newly developed American psychology of “human becoming”. As is well known, psychology of religion is important in all these psychologies, in spite of a declaration by a Russian psychologist at the international congress in Mexico in 1963 that dead religion no longer constituted an object of interest to psychologists.

As a student of philosophy I was interested in existential psychological questions. This interest led me to study the then-new philosophy of Heidegger, as well as some Scheler, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. The texts of Heidegger, which meditate

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A. Vergote (✉)

Emeritus Professor, University of Leuven, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

on and clarify essential existential experiences, were, are, and will continue to be of great significance for psychologists of the human being. I was reminded of this when in 1957, at Heidegger's invitation, I dined alone with the man himself in Cerisy-la-Sale. We talked extensively about psychoanalysis. Heidegger's philosophy of existential experiences and ideas obliges psychologists of religion to pose radical questions about religious "experiences" and about fundamental human desire and its deep ambivalences. Heidegger refers to Kierkegaard who, although not technically a psychologist, is undoubtedly a master in the psychological analysis of man and the enlightening influence upon him of biblical religion.

When historical events led me to do a doctorate in philosophy on Thomas Aquinas, I chose to focus on a question in his works which is at the same time philosophical, theological, and psychological: desire, especially religious desire as constitutive of the mind and the psyche, and its uncertain reaching towards the divine reality, possibly one's personal God. Later on, as a psychologist of religion, I reaped the benefits of these philosophical studies.

The particularity of biblical religion is most important for the psychology of religion. Its fundamental idea is that of the self-revelation of the deity as the distinctive most personal deity, as the personal God. As a psychologist, I naturally put to one side the conviction that this religious conception is born of self-revelation through words and actions by this God, but had to take account of the fact that this very specific religious conviction is of major importance for the psychology of persons belonging to this religion or opposed to what it has always regarded as its own essence. Through contemporary multiple intercultural contacts, this religion also influences other religions. The divine being speaking very personally to certain elected individuals, the prophets, is surely neither a celestial stone nor a higher star! The divine self-revealing being of biblical religion is obviously a divine self, beyond and fundamentally different from the vague divine being of which such great philosophers as Plato and Aristotle could conceive. This fact is also essential for the development of the western concept of the human being as a personal ego. I have become increasingly convinced that the western philosophical and psychological conception of the human being as personal ego is an essential cultural consequence of biblical-Christian God revelation. In my doctoral thesis of theology, which was based an exegetical study, my aim was to show that it is not redemption of sin but self-revelation of the divine being as a personal God that is the major idea, most explicitly in the fourth Gospel. This is, of course, of major importance for an empirically oriented psychology of religion.

The psychological religious interest was present in my mind the day after my defense of my doctoral thesis of philosophy, when I went to Professor Nuttin, who was essentially interested in the psychology of human development, to ask if he would lend me his bicycle for an evening ride in the woods near Leuven. I also asked for some suggestions for books to read during my free summer. As I already knew all the works he mentioned, he asked me if I would be interested in giving some lectures in this field, for he wished to include psychology of religion on the program of psychological studies he was organizing at that time.

Having been offered special postdoctoral grants for study in Paris and in Freiburg in Germany, I opted for Paris, giving up my grant for Freiburg, and stayed there for

a considerable time. There was no scientific study of the psychology of religion in Paris, not even at the Institut Catholique. This will come as no surprise to scholars acquainted with the history of the psychology of religion in the years 1950–1970. Piaget was a brilliant professor of psychology at the Sorbonne, but he devoted his lectures to what has been his major work: *Gestalt* psychology in different kinds of perception. I found the most interesting studies of psychology of the personality in the newly founded Société Française de Psychanalyse, by, among others, D. Lagache, J. Lacan, and Françoise Dolto. There was also a real psychological interest in religion, largely in line with authentically Freudian studies. The majority of the leading members were atheists but they had a good knowledge of Christian religion and, although not subscribing to it themselves, appreciated its cultural and psychological significance. They had no objections to a priest with higher university degrees and an objective scientific disposition doing the training and analyses required for membership of their psychoanalytical society.

In the years 1954–1958 Paris was a most interesting place, both directly and indirectly, for a future psychologist of religion. The lectures by Merleau-Ponty on phenomenology and by Lévi-Strauss on ethnography were stimulating for psychologists. Psychology of religion itself, however, was only present outside the university, essentially in the convent of the Carmelites, who published the famous and (from a psychology point of view) highly important *Études Carmelitaines*, issues of which on mysticism and on possession (Satan, 1948) were of major significance for a branch of psychology then in its infancy. The trend of thought in this group was essentially Jungian, but they had sympathy and real psychological interest in the work of psychoanalysts such as Lacan and Dolto, Freudian psychoanalysts who disagreed with the unconvincing rationalistic view of religion.

During this time I became thoroughly acquainted with the major works of Jung and was able to engage in discussion with Jungian psychotherapists. I gradually perceived that the opposition between Freud and Jung is of major importance for the psychology of religion. I still remember the virulent opposition to Freud on the part of some Jungian therapists or theologians, but my studies in theology made me quickly aware that their Jungian interpretation of biblical religion was a new form of the Gnostic views that pervaded Christian thinking in southern Europe in the second and following centuries. The studies for my theological doctorate in exegesis had enabled me to detect these new Gnostic features in Jungian psychology and to understand the fascination it held for those with psychological and religious interests.

Discussions with Jungian psychologists strengthened my psychological and theological interests in mystical writings, especially those of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. I still believe, however, that a Freudian psychoanalytical background helps the reading and understanding of the extraordinary psychological analyses which these mystics carry out and elucidate. It certainly helped me to write my work *Guilt and Desire* (1988). As I write in my book, Freud did not really understand the major importance of the mystical vector in the various great religions. His psychological interpretation of mysticism is simply that of a rationalist mind completely deprived of any kind of personal religious experiential approach to the mystical experience. This conviction has also been of major importance for my systematic psychological studies of the different types of “religious experience.”

Reading Jung and talking with Jungian psychologists inspired me to read interesting studies on “primitive” cultures and religions, for example, Mircea Eliade and the most interesting and genuinely scientific anthropologist, E. E. Evans-Pritchard. These readings strengthened the conviction I had already acquired in my study of Heidegger and in my reading of theologians such as H. de Lubac that symbolic interpretation is a key to understanding religious conception and ritual behaviors. In-depth study of the origin of the Christian religion made me cautious, however, in my evaluation of symbolic language and action. Studies of evolving language and child perception confirmed my insights. They also threw light on the problems Freud had distinguishing between, on the one hand, preconscious symbolic perception, and language and the repression of ideas and wishes that an individual preconsciously feels endanger him. Study of Freud convinced me that the way in which Jung developed his conceptions after some years of collaboration with Freud strengthened the latter’s tendency to reduce symbolic representation to neurotic repression and indirect expression of repressed ideas and desires.

In teaching psychology of religion, I regularly sought to clarify for myself and my students the very important topic of symbolic experience and representation. Clarifying and resolving the opposition between Freud and Jung was a major topic in my study and lectures in this respect, and, at least implicitly, meant continuing my studies of the Gnostic writings. I also again studied the texts of Jacques Lacan and when he visited Louvain, where I invited him twice, I was able to discuss the subject further with him. My conviction was, and still is, that French “surrealism” heavily influenced Lacan and strengthened him in his psychoanalytical renewal of the old Gnostic interpretation of Christian belief.

These ideas and questions were of course at the forefront of my mind when I was given the task of lecturing on psychology of religion and guiding the personal research of students at university level. I mention, by way of an example, the various research on the explicit and implicit contents of the God representation among a wide range of educated Christians and Hindus, including members of both male and female monastic orders. One of the striking things to emerge from this research was that a very large number of these individuals, even those in the religious orders, referred in their prayers and meditation to a vaguely conceived personal deity, but not explicitly to the God of Jesus Christ in whom they confessed to believe, and to whom many were even devoting their whole lives. My interpretation of this is as follows. The texts they read for meditating are not theological treatises but complexly developed convictions and personal insights, such as the mystical writings of John of the Cross. In the very personal presence of the God they worship, their mind and affectivity reaches through the texts to a divine presence of which they do not further develop their perception in intellectual schemes. This is an important observation for psychologists of religion for, in taking the objective scientific point of view, they often tend to neglect the religious *act* itself and to consider only the ideas and memories underlying it. The scientific mind in psychology observes and analyzes the observable data and expressions but it tends to neglect the capital contribution of the psychic *acts* in language and in lived relationships. We may contrast this with the way scientific information concerning psychotherapy works; it scientifically

interprets the words of the patient, but it tends to neglect what in therapy is absolutely essential, not only the patient's ideas about the therapist but the implicit or very explicit consciousness of his personal listening presence. One famous professor of psychology unintentionally acted out a caricature of psychotherapy by regularly lying down on his sofa and confiding free associations to his tape recorder!

In my experience of many discussions at various congresses, the most important difficulties in the scientific praxis of psychology of religion are the intrinsic complexity of religious convictions and acts, and, in addition, the maintaining of scientific neutrality. I still vividly remember the talk I had on these questions with G. Allport at the annual psychology conference in Washington in 1963. We had both been invited to give a talk at the symposium on the psychology of religion that the American Association of Psychology had for the first time organized at its congress. Allport told me that he was a believing Anglican and was always grieved by the rationalistic distrust he met among psychologists; for them, religion was a premodern way of thinking. Besides, he was also the first psychologist in the United States to study normal adult development. Although not a scientific giant, he developed good psychological conceptions of human becoming and he rightly intended to free psychology from the dominant but false concept of personal "needs." I myself am also strongly opposed to this originally biological concept being so readily transposed into human psychology, especially into psychology of religion. While working and teaching in the field of psychology, I became aware of how difficult it is to elaborate a science of the most proper human reality – the psychic reality – that precisely exists, develops, and works in interaction and exchange of body and mind. The often dominant false concept of need distorts much writing on the psychology of religion, just as it does with other areas of psychology. Often, however, the use of the term "need" by psychologists is simply an attempt to win the respect of colleagues in the fields of medicine and biology.

Another major factor that makes psychological study of religion particularly difficult in the modern European context is the very personal character of the religious and areligious disposition. Individuals who are convinced atheists are more outspoken about their convictions, as their nonbelief takes the shape of militant assurance. Experience leads me to think, however, that in many cases the asserted nonbelief conviction is the sincere expression of a deep psychological defense against what is preconsciously perceived as personally menacing. The experience of converts surely confirms this interpretation, as do the readings of such great mystical writers as John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, not to mention the tragedy of Jesus of Nazareth! Psychoanalysts and theologians are not sufficiently aware of the fear which the idea of a new or renewed very personal religious attitude often involves. Although aware of Rudolf Otto's analyses of religious joy and fear, psychologists are not sufficiently conscious, I think, that the issue remains fundamental in the general psychology of religion. The largely dominant utilitarian mindset in our civilization does not predispose educational psychologists to consider this ambiguous psychic reality.

With these ideas in mind, I tried to focus psychological research on the ambiguous and often changing religious dispositions of adults and elderly people.



This of course is a difficult task for students, who still lack experience, are more at ease in working with children and adolescents, and have not yet properly worked through their own personal conflicts: one would not ask a color-blind person to study paintings! Sociologists of religion have done much research on the religion of adults, but I think that for the most part the psychological categories they are forced to use are psychologically too simplistic. I have often participated in their meetings, but I am convinced that their self-certainty often blinds them to the oversimplified rationality of the schemes they apply in the interpretations of religious and religiously indifferent behaviors. Most often their basic thinking is founded on overelementary psychological schemes of needs and of the determining effect of education. In my experience, pastors are often too easily accepting of these apparently rational schemes.

Social and general cultural environment are certainly very important in the formation and the persistence or evanescence of religious and antireligious dispositions. My knowledge of psychologists and my limited experience of sociologists, together with my readings of cultural anthropology, lead me to the conviction that the formation and the research of psychology of religion should also be sociological. I think too that the excessively rigid separation of these two sciences results from an overrationalistic view of the human being. It is worth recalling at this point that Freud was a convinced biologist before he gradually began to discover the psychic reality and to believe profoundly that the whole surrounding civilization has a deep influence on personal psychic development and on the possible development of very personal neurosis.

It is not possible, of course, for one person to master sufficiently and to use in his research the very complex world of religion and the psychological roots, moves, and changes in religion as it is actually experienced. In my experience, pastoral workers are often more at ease with sociological conceptions than with complex psychological analyses. This should not surprise us, as sociological descriptions seem to be more directly useful and they do not ask personal questions of their readers.

To summarize my experiences and thoughts: the psychologist of religion in the Christian context must have a real theological knowledge of the Christian religion and must be trained in the scientific disposition of intellectual neutrality; he must have a formation in psychological research and interpretation; he should conduct specific research by means of in-depth personal interviews, especially with adults; some knowledge and experience of clinical realities is also desirable. This conclusion is based on my personal research experiences and on my involvement in both fruitful, and less fruitful, meetings and collaborations.

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## Chapter 16

# The Evolution of a Psychologist of Religion

David M. Wulff



On November 7, 1940, the day I was born, *The New York Times* headlined the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to an unprecedented third term as president of the United States. The rest of the front page was filled with portentous news of the deepening war in Europe: London had suffered yet another massive nighttime bombardment by German planes; a British convoy in the mid-Atlantic was feared lost after shelling by a Nazi raider; and Greece had successfully warded off an Italian invasion, only a few months later to be overrun by the German army.

The small world that welcomed me, however, was far removed from these terrible events. My father, a pastor in the American Lutheran Church (ALC), had recently been called from Cheboygan, Michigan, to minister to a congregation in a tiny village in northwestern Ohio. In addition to the parsonage and the cemetery that flanked the church, Dowling consisted of just a few other houses, a small school, and a general store alongside the single train track. To supplement his modest wages,

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D.M. Wulff (✉)

Department of Psychology, Wheaton College, Norton, MA 02766, USA  
e-mail: dwulff@wheatonma.edu

my father, the son of a German immigrant farmer, maintained a large vegetable garden as well as a cow, a few ducks, and a flock of chickens. My mother, the daughter of Norwegian immigrants, would occasionally serve at the hospital in nearby Bowling Green as a nurse-anesthetist; otherwise, she sewed our clothing, canned fruits and vegetables, refinished old furniture, and played the supportive role expected of a minister's wife.

This simple, bucolic world suddenly collapsed around me at the age of 3 when my father, who had long suffered from pernicious anemia, died at 39 of stomach cancer. My mother, two older brothers, and I moved soon thereafter to Bowling Green, where we boys lived together for 12 weeks in a succession of two foster homes while our mother was employed nights at the community hospital. Once she was able to purchase a small home for us, she took a full-time position as a visiting nurse with the county health department. From a young age, accordingly, we three boys were expected to be independent and responsible, even to stay at home alone when circumstances required it. On one such occasion, when I was no more than 4 years old and still recovering from whooping cough, Mother tried to reassure me by saying that, in her absence, God would look after me. As she told the story years later, I replied, "But I wish I could see him."<sup>1</sup>

Unable to conjure up the presence of a heavenly father, I became preoccupied with finding a new earthly one. When a teacher of my kindergarten class remarked that it seemed unfair that she and her husband had only girls and my mother, only boys, and then jokingly suggested that her youngest daughter and I should switch places, I took it as a serious proposal—indeed, as a *fait accompli*. That evening, I announced the arrangement to my mother and said that I needed to pack a suitcase. After an awkward consultation, it was agreed that I could stay with the other family for 2 days. But when I subsequently told my mother that I planned to stay on, she declared that she had no son to spare and took me home. I remained on the lookout for a new father, and it was not long before I confided to a teacher that I would soon have one; but in fact no candidate was yet in sight.

After my mother remarried, when I was 8, I immediately set about to identify in tangible ways with my stepfather, a well-respected member of our church. I eagerly adopted his last name, Behrman, as my own, incorrectly anticipating that our names would be changed when he adopted us, and I asked for his help in creating in my hair the wave that he fashioned in his own. But I soon abandoned those efforts, and I never did grow close to him, a kindly but reticent man of few intellectual pretensions.

The arrival of my stepfather, although welcome in many respects, was soon followed by a new crisis. He had lived with his first wife, Eleanor, just two doors down

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this essay, I have relied on extensive memoranda that my mother typed up from time to time; on an interview I taped with her in 1979, when she was 71; and for the bulk of the essay, the voluminous files I kept from 1961 onward of all my correspondence with family members, friends, former students, and scholars. Some of my most revealing letters ran to seven or eight pages, typed and single-spaced. I also kept extensive files of syllabi, handouts, and other materials related to my teaching of the psychology of religion at Michigan. My longstanding practice of noting in most books the dates on which I acquire them was also helpful for reconstructing the chronology of events in this essay.

from us, and, unable to have children of their own, they had adopted an infant son, who was a year older than I. Eleanor, an attractive and college-educated woman but one of marked sociopathic tendencies, had physically and emotionally abused both my stepfather and their son; my stepfather eventually became seriously ill, apparently from arsenic poisoning, and the son, Danny, had become a physical threat to other children. The divorce decree awarded custody of Danny to his father, thus he also became part of our new family configuration.

Mother had warned us that Danny would need a great deal of patience and love, but within months it became clear that he was unpredictably dangerous. The final straw came when he tried to choke me; my brothers, fortunately, were close enough to pull him off. I was deeply frightened, and everyone else, profoundly concerned. With a judge's order, Danny was placed in the local children's home for delinquents and orphans and thereby made available for adoption. He was welcomed into a series of foster homes but then returned, until he was finally adopted into a family with two older adopted children. He came to visit us several times as a young adult, once with his new wife, fully accepting of my parents' earlier, momentous decision; they said that living with him was still difficult.

Throughout my childhood years, Eleanor continued to live in close proximity to us, and from time to time she would find ways of taunting us or of making life difficult. My brothers and I perceived her as frighteningly unpredictable and dangerous, especially knowing that she had a gun, and thus we would always walk past her house as quickly as we could, anxious to avoid encountering her. Once suspected of having been involved in a murder, she was my personal embodiment of evil, and the fact that she was never held responsible for years of fraudulent business dealings and bizarre actions was for me an insoluble conundrum.

Otherwise it was an ideal neighborhood in which to grow up. We lived on a quiet private lane within a stone's throw of Bowling Green State University, whose laboratory school was our ward's elementary school. That proximity and the kindness of persons who knew our circumstances led to various opportunities, including free tickets to concerts and plays as well as access to the university's library and athletic facilities. Years later, when a last-minute opportunity came along to leave high school a year early, I elected to spend my freshman year at BGSU, with the knowledge that I would then be accepted on a full scholarship at Wittenberg College (now University) in Springfield, Ohio. During two summers at home I also took courses at BGSU.

Especially given our proximity to the university, many of our neighbors were college professors and other professionals, some of whose children were our playmates. These neighbors were generous and reliable sources of expertise and materials that we needed for our various projects. The exceptional terrain of our neighborhood (we bordered on the otherwise flat town's only hill) made for an irregular layout of homes of varying architecture. A road wound its way around one side of a stone quarry that had eventually filled with water; on its edge stood an authentic-appearing windmill, visible from our house, that provided support services to eight nearby duplex apartments built of stone. This road made for perfect sledding in the winter and high-speed biking in the summer.

Bowling Green, “a small-town paradise in the 1950s unexercised and unbreathed,” in the words of the Presbyterian minister’s daughter, Ann Imbrie (1993, p. 99), “moved and changed slowly.” Lily-white with no more than two or three Jewish families, Bowling Green was a conservative community: politically, religiously, and socially. Predominately Republican and Protestant-Christian, it was a town where no one would have thought to object to the annual gathering of the University Laboratory School students to sing carols around the Christmas tree they had decorated.<sup>2</sup>

As fervently religious as our father was, our mother did all she could to encourage her sons to sink deep roots into the Christian faith. Meals, even in restaurants and our atheist aunt and uncle’s home, were preceded by prayers we were expected to speak aloud together. Dinner was daily followed by devotions: the Bible reading prescribed for the day by the ALC’s monthly devotional booklet; the accompanying brief meditation on it; and finally the Lord’s Prayer. There were formulary prayers at bedtime, too, in the presence of a large framed print of “Jesus Blessing the Children,” by the nineteenth-century German Romantic painter Bernhard Plockhorst. In the place of the childhood fictional classics read by many of our contemporaries (Mother thought fiction far less worthwhile than real-life stories) we read aloud the Bible and stories of missionary families. In our modest inventory of board games was Bible Lotto, which required one to know such biblical facts as what God created on the third day (dry land and vegetation) and how many years Methuselah had lived (969). Our family faithfully attended every scheduled church service, including Wednesday evening services during Lent; Mother sometimes played the organ and our stepfather was long the church treasurer; and we boys served as acolytes, sang in the church choir, and participated in Luther League. I also typed and mimeographed the Sunday church bulletin, and for a time I taught a Sunday School class, for which I also prepared mimeographed materials.

What I did not fully appreciate until years later were the progressive threads, the social activism, that formed the warp of our mother’s simple faith. She took it for granted that she would assist our minister-father in looking after the well-being of their parishioners, and in Bowling Green she lent support to a number of women with personal or family problems. When Hispanic migrant workers came to town to harvest the tomato crop that sustained the local Heinz ketchup factory, Mother would arrange to pick up some of their children to take to Sunday School. During the years that she pitched in to keep our stepfather’s collection agency afloat, she also served as a veritable social worker, addressing a host of problems in addition to the unpaid bills. When a high-school math teacher was arrested for sodomy-in the 1950s, most states still had such cruel laws on their books-she wrote to him during his days in the county jail, expressing sympathy for his unfortunate circumstances, including the taunting he received from high-school boys outside his jailhouse window; and she thanked him for his inspired teaching, his advising of the school newspaper, and his founding of a chess club. He was found guilty, placed on probation

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<sup>2</sup> While my mother was still a widow, that tree, stripped of its decorations, became ours once the school had closed for the holiday.

under the condition that he receive psychiatric treatment, and barred from any further teaching, even though he never molested students. Mother stayed in correspondence with him for the rest of his life.

Thus I was deeply immersed in a household that took the social gospel seriously. But my own spontaneous interests were mainly in the natural world and in science. Living creatures of any kind fascinated me, including the tiny frogs I would collect in the woods adjoining an aunt and uncle's home in Michigan and the series of anoles chameleons that I ordered from Johnson & Smith, a novelty mail-order company in Detroit. I was allotted a small plot of land to grow flowers, and at its center was a fishpond with goldfish and water lilies. Once I had acquired a microscope, I took pleasure in exploring the world of tiny organisms that also inhabited the pond. For one of my science projects in tenth-grade biology I created a large model of a drop of pond water, using as the display case a round wooden cheese box fixed on its side, a clear plastic window on the front, and indirect lighting within. Its occupants – rotifers, paramecia, amoebas, and other such creatures – were fashioned out of plastic wood, using strands of copper lamp wire for their cilia, and attached to algae of painted lamp cord. I also experimented with growing molds in Petri dishes, built a microprojector as a science fair project, made a hinged model of the human eye, and spent countless hours in the basement experimenting with my chemistry set.

Still, religion remained a constant, and thus it was that, in an eighth grade social studies class, when my classmates and I were assigned the task of researching two occupations that we might consider entering, I chose “research scientist” and “minister.” Little did I anticipate that I would eventually choose a field, psychology of religion, that would come close to combining the two.

It was only a year or so later, when I was 14, that the older of my brothers rapidly sickened and died of testicular cancer. It is difficult to recall how I personally felt then, perhaps because the role of supporting our mother fell mainly to me and thus it was her emotions that I most remember. My brother's death was a terrible blow to our mother, who later said that losing a son was more difficult than losing a husband. I still remember well the afternoon when she first told me, in a flood of tears, that Martin was dying, and for long afterwards, tears still came easily to her. Her faith was clearly a support to her, although she held out no hope for a miraculous cure; as a nurse, she knew full well that testicular cancer was then a death sentence (today it is among the most curable of cancers) and she told me later that she feared she might lose her faith if she prayed without success for a miracle.

Perhaps because I so revered my idealized minister-father, I was long reluctant to put my own faith to the test, to examine it critically. I remember eventually puzzling over the anachronism of the cardboard crèche we set up each Christmas, with the three wise men worshipping the infant Jesus along with the shepherds, even though the biblical account put the arrival of the gift-bearing trio some two years later. I wondered how the situation of Mother's having two husbands would play out in heaven. And from time to time, I pondered whether my father was looking down from heaven and judging me, and why my prayers, no matter how heartfelt, seemed never to be answered.

It was not until I was required to take courses in the Old and New Testaments at Wittenberg, however, that the ground truly started shifting under me. Whereas the conservative world of Bible Lotto had led me unwittingly to embrace the doctrine of inerrancy and all the attitudes that tend to go with it, I was suddenly confronted at Wittenberg by the historicity and thoroughly human character of the Bible. That many of the professors at this liberal Lutheran school were apparently still church-going believers was reassuring; but by my senior year it seemed as if a vague belief in God might be all that would survive of my childhood faith.

What I did not yet realize was that a new perspective on religion was slowly taking shape in me, first reflected in my fascination with the Gnostic tradition in a course on the history of the Christian church that I took as a college senior. Learning about Gnosticism – including its sharply dualistic worldview, esoteric doctrine of salvation, and profusion of mysterious symbols – prepared me for an immediate appreciation of Jung’s analytical psychology, which was shaped in part by Jung’s early study of Gnostic symbolism. It also helped me to see how profoundly the Christian tradition had been transformed by its battle with the Gnostic “heresies” and how deeply conditioned religious traditions are by human imagination and culture.

Jung I had discovered on my own. Still inclined toward the physical and biological sciences when I declared a major in psychology, I avoided the “softer” courses, such as Personality, that were popular with nonmajors and took instead the more “scientific” ones, including Experimental Psychology. Our main textbook in the latter, year-long course was Leo Postman and James Egan’s *Experimental Psychology: An Introduction* (1949), nearly half of which is given over to sensation and perception; it also considers judgment, action, association, learning, emotion, and socialized behavior. Over the course of the year, we replicated various studies by mapping the color zones of our retinas, experimenting with color mixing (that I had done as a boy, not with a color wheel but with colored water and with cellophane) and employing a memory drum to study learning and forgetting. We also “experimented,” introspectively, with several of the Gestalt principles of perception.

Having decided that I wanted to be a professor at a liberal arts college much like Wittenberg, I chose to apply to graduate schools in “general experimental psychology,” naively assuming that the governing adjective was “general” and hence that such programs would best prepare me for teaching a wide variety of courses. It was fortuitous that, in making my final, anguished decision, I chose the University of Michigan rather than Johns Hopkins, attractive though the offer from Hopkins was, for already in my first month of graduate work I experienced serious doubts about the choice I had made. Michigan, fortunately, was large, diverse, and flexible enough to offer me a variety of alternative areas, including Personality and Development, where I finally found a home. Ann Arbor was also close enough to Bowling Green that I could make frequent trips back there in 1965 when, in rapid succession, my mother injured herself in falling down the basement steps and my stepfather, a diabetic since the apparent poisoning, died of a heart attack at 58.

During my first year at Michigan I was a research assistant to Professor Arthur Melton, a rather intimidating brigadier general in the Air Force Reserve (from his years as an aviation psychologist), a founder of Michigan’s Human Performance

Center, and the editor of the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*. Although I did not find his research on short-term memory the least bit exciting, the data that I painstakingly collected along with another assistant, Robert Crowder, who would go on to a distinguished career in memory research at Yale, did apparently yield theoretically interesting results. A report on the research to the sponsoring U.S. Army agency (Melton, 1963a) anticipated that Crowder and I would be coauthors of a separate publication, "Short-Term Memory for Individual Items with Varying Numbers of Elements." But what appeared in journal form was only a revised version of the Army report under the same title and authorship (Melton, 1963b).

My switch to the Personality and Development area brought with it an opportunity for a more congenial research assistantship, this one with Warren Norman, who was an early contributor to the development of the five-factor model of personality (Norman, 1963, 1969). Assuming that all significant variations in human personality are preserved in the natural language, Norman followed the example of Allport and Odbert (1936) in deriving and organizing a massive list of terms descriptive of personality, this time using the new, Third Edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary*, published in 1961. Before I joined the project, research assistants had identified more than 40,000 words that they judged to be relevant to describing persons, nearly 10% of the dictionary's total. These then were sorted into 15 categories, and the 1,431 commonly used words that described enduring traits (category 1) were given in subsets to hundreds of students to define, to apply to themselves and others, and to rate in terms of social desirability. My chief task was to systematically organize the 100 definitions we had for each word, to establish how accurately each was understood by our participants.

When I later developed the Temporal Orientation Questionnaire (TOQ) for my PhD dissertation, Norman provided research funds to pay volunteers to complete his personality questionnaire along with the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values and the TOQ. As a member of my doctoral committee, he also assisted me with the statistical analysis. When I took his Personality Assessment course in my second year, I chose the Study of Values as the subject of my term paper; he suggested that I include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), then still a research instrument at Educational Testing Service, as a second example of an assessment device based on a personality typology – the Study of Values on Eduard Spranger's and the MBTI on Jung's. Both typologies and the instruments intended to assess them would later find a place in my book on the psychology of religion.

My years at Michigan slowly but inexorably changed me. Ann Arbor was already a virtual oasis of liberalism in the conservative Midwest, and the revolutionary 1960s bloomed there in abundance. It was for me a period of intellectual, religious, and social emancipation, perhaps similar to what G. Stanley Hall reported from his year of study in Germany (Wulff, 1997b, p. 54). I grew a beard became a vegetarian, tried marijuana, and nearly took LSD. There was also a vicarious element to my 1960s explorations, for in June, 1967, I accepted a full-time position as the Counseling Director at the University's Office of Religious Affairs. For 15 months, then, I worked with a variety of students who, just a few years younger than I, were struggling with challenges and problems not so unlike my own.



It is not surprising, therefore, that the expected four or five years of graduate study expanded for me into eight during the last three of which I lived on the second floor of an otherwise seldom-occupied and secluded house on Horseshoe Lake nine miles north of Ann Arbor. Settling in as if for an indefinite stay, I built three floor-to-ceiling bookcases to accommodate my ever-growing library, which included a number of classic works in psychology that I had bought for pennies at a bookstore selling off an education professor's library. I took delight in the seasonal changes in this idyllic setting, enjoying swimming in the summer and ice skating in the winter; it was a perfect place to entertain students and friends, and to work on my dissertation.

When I began my graduate studies in psychology, the field was still under the thrall of logical empiricism and its spinoffs in psychology of operationism and behaviorism. Logical empiricism, which rejected metaphysics and devoted itself instead to the logical analysis of language, represented a radical critique of traditional philosophy. So also did existentialism. In his 1953 Gifford Lectures, the British philosopher John Macmurray (1957) remarked that these two contemporary forms of philosophy

both rest upon the decision that the traditional method of philosophy is incapable of solving its traditional problems. But whereas the logical empiricists discard the problems in order to maintain the method, the existentialists relinquish the method in wrestling with the problems. So the latter achieve a minimum of form; the former a minimum of substance. The logical empiricists are content to elaborate the subtleties of formal analysis – and often with the beauty of genius; so far as the substantial problems go, they use their formalism to erect notices on every path which say “No road this way!” For all the roads that do not lead to the impassable bogs of metaphysics belong to the special sciences. The existentialists, determined to grapple with the real problems – and their sensitiveness to the darkness of human despair leads them to discover the emergent problem of our time – find no formal analysis that is adequate to the task. They are constrained to quit the beaten track; to wallow in metaphor and suggestion; to look to the drama and the novel to provide an expression, albeit an aesthetic expression, for their discoveries. (pp. 27–28)

Macmurray's evident sympathy for the existential perspective was already apparent in his Terry Lectures at Yale, *The Structure of Religious Experience* (1936), a work that deeply affected me when I discovered it in 1966 and that prepared me for an appreciation later on of object relations theory, which Macmurray helped to inspire (Wulff, 1997b, p. 337).

Guided by a departmental list of recommended readings, I bought several books on the philosophy of science (e.g., Feigl & Brodbeck, 1953) in my first couple of years of graduate study, although there is no evidence that I read them in any systematic way. My first formal introduction to logical empiricism and especially the logic of operational definitions came in Warren Norman's course on assessment. I did well in the course, partly by dutifully keeping the reading journal that was required of us; but I was not yet ready, perhaps even able, to voice in the journal the misgivings that I was silently entertaining. I certainly did not think that they would be well received.

Those doubts arose in large part from my growing familiarity with the literature on existentialism and humanistic psychology and the conviction that they asked questions and offered insights that positivistic psychology did not. Particularly influential was the book *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*,

edited by Rollo May, Ernest Angel, and Henri Ellenberger (1958), which I acquired as a college senior and, over the subsequent years, read and annotated cover to cover. I eventually assigned it as a textbook in my course on abnormal psychology.

My interest in existentialism, both as philosophy and as psychology, expanded to include phenomenology as a formal methodology. I had the good fortune of being able to take a seminar on phenomenological psychology with the dean of the field, Robert MacLeod, when he visited Michigan in the fall of 1964 from Cornell. He in turn introduced me to Herbert Spiegelberg (1965), author of the monumental *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, first published in 1960. Spiegelberg invited me to participate in his 1966 two-week workshop in phenomenology at Washington University in St. Louis, which that year was attended mainly by graduate students. He also gladly accepted my offer to evaluate the workshop using a questionnaire that I designed (Spiegelberg, 1966). There was no question that phenomenology was in the air: Just four years earlier the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy held its organizational meeting; now it is one of the largest philosophical societies in North America. For me, too, phenomenology was becoming foundational.

As my perspective in psychology evolved, so also did my religious views. During my initial year of graduate school, I attended the Lutheran Student Church, joined the choir, and was eventually elected president of the Lutheran Student Association. But in 1963, after a falling out with the Church's pastor, a highly critical man who had jaundiced views of psychology and chastised me for occasionally skipping Sunday morning services when course work was pressing, I began attending services at Trinity Lutheran Church instead, also in Ann Arbor, and soon became a member of both the church and the choir.

Where I was in my thinking at that time is reflected in an address I gave in my hometown church in September, 1963, at the pastor's invitation. The main theme – that religion rightly understood is not a palliative, a source of comfort and adjustment, but a condition of creative insecurity – was borrowed from the Boston University philosopher Peter Bertocci (1958). I also cited the Lutheran sociologist Peter Berger, Søren Kierkegaard, and Reinhold Niebuhr. I cautiously suggested the possibility that “some stories” in the Bible are mythic, that is, truer than historical fact in the way they address the human condition. And I extolled the virtues of love, tolerance, and forgiveness. But I also asserted that “a belief in the creativity of God, the redemptive nature of Jesus, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit gives a strength and assurance not otherwise possible.”

I presume I was sincere. But the reality is that, a year later, I left the Lutheran Church effectively an atheist. The 1960s was the decade of the death-of-God movement, beginning with *The Death of God* (1961) by the Protestant-Christian theologian Gabriel Vahanian; modern secular society, he argued, had lost all sense of the sacred. I read Vahanian as well as Richard Rubenstein's *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (1966). I bought, studied, and then squirreled away the April 8, 1966, issue of *Time* magazine, with its massively researched feature article, “Toward a Hidden God,” announced by a dramatic cover that asked, in bold red letters against a black background, “Is God Dead?”

I remained intellectually and spiritually at loose ends. I once or twice attended services at the Unitarian-Universalist Church, where I had also spoken to a youth group, and then, for several months, the Society of Friends (the Quakers). In May I wrote to a friend that I had been reading about far-flung places and cultures and, still shaken by “my recent re-evaluations and disappointment in psychology,” I was feeling overwhelmed, having “suddenly lost foundations and perspective.” I compared myself to a phoenix fanning the flames of its pyre, but with no confidence that it would spring forth anew.

It was a relief no longer to profess beliefs that had never been supported by my own experience; but I was only beginning to construct new foundations for some sort of articulate faith, “religious” or not. Letters I wrote in 1965 and 1966 reported that once-settled issues had come alive, that I was examining alternatives that earlier had been unavailable to me. Never had I had so few certainties, I said, nor had so many things seemed possible; it all added up to the feeling that I had lost direction. But by 1967, I was celebrating the new world that had opened before me, giving me a freedom that I had never imagined possible. And I expressed delight in finding myself accepting other people without judgment.

There is no question that my growing familiarity with the psychology of religion played a major role in these changes. During my first year of graduate school I had already acquired several books on the psychology of religion, a subject I had not earlier encountered. The first that I read was Walter Clark’s *The Psychology of Religion* (1958), the best survey available at that time. But the conflict I was experiencing between my religious views and deterministic psychology soon led me on a detour through *What, Then, Is Man?*, a work commissioned by the conservative Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod to study “the problem of man as he is viewed in theology, psychology, and psychiatry” (Meehl, 1958, p. vi). The chair of this “symposium” was the distinguished Minnesota psychologist Paul Meehl, who acknowledged the dominance of logical positivism (empiricism) in psychology at that time and the resulting substantive disagreements between psychologists and (Lutheran) theologians. Some of these disagreements may eventually be resolvable by factual evidence or further linguistic analysis, Meehl says, but some genuine incompatibilities will remain. Meehl helped me to clarify the terms of my own struggle, but when he acknowledged that “the Christian has made a certain kind of commitment, with a vigor and pervasiveness which is far out of proportion to what the empirical evidence warrants” (p. 162), he must have lent weight to the side of doubt.

As I continued to read in the psychology of religion, I anticipated volunteering to teach the psychology department’s Psychology and Religion course. First introduced by the experimental and comparative psychologist John Shepard years before (Raphelson, 1968, p. 54) and then taken over by the educational psychologist Wilbert (Bill) McKeachie when he arrived at Michigan in 1948, it was a stepchild in the department: worth two credits instead of the usual three and unavailable for credit toward the psychology major, it also fell outside the departmental budget, subsisting instead on unpaid graduate-student labor. It was for the spring 1963 offering of the course that I first volunteered, along with three other graduate students, including the social-psychology student who had given it its present form, one that was more

sociological and theological than psychological. He gave most of the weekly lectures to the 60 or so students, and each of us then met with a discussion section for a second meeting each week. I contributed one lecture at the beginning, on the conflict between psychology and religion, drawing mainly on Meehl's book.

We were not far into the semester when the students in my section expressed disappointment in the content of the course. Sharing their concern, I supplemented the assigned readings with James, Freud, Allport, and Fromm, along with Huston Smith's *The Religions of Man* (1958). Finally we were in the domain of the psychology of religion, much to their satisfaction and mine.

The next year, the social psychologist having finished his PhD and left Michigan, McKeachie asked me in his role as department chair to take over the course. I started anew with a syllabus that included the classic contributors mentioned above, among others.<sup>3</sup> I continued with the course for another 4 years, over which time interest in the course burgeoned: 70 enrolled in 1964, 131 in 1965, 195 in 1966, and 340 in 1967. Of the 131 in 1965, 120 were registered with me. In 1967, I was lecturing to 240 of the students and then meeting with them a second time each week in eight discussion sections. With nine contact hours a week, I had a heavier course load than any professor in the department. By then we were finally paid a teaching fellow's salary and majors could take the course for credit.

Teaching the course was a heady experience for me, especially given the exceptional student interest and appreciation. That response helped to solidify my interest in the field, and it prompted McKeachie early in 1964 to suggest that I make the psychology of religion the subject of my preliminary examinations and my dissertation. He offered to serve as the chair of my committee.

Pleased by that prospect, I assembled the required program of study, including a lengthy bibliography, and submitted it to the faculty committee that would approve it for the Personality and Development area. One professor said that he initially "recoiled" from the topic, another thought it was too theoretical; but they concluded it was acceptable under their current liberal policy. When I reported to Gerhard Lenski, a Lutheran sociologist of religion then at Michigan, how tepid if not hostile the response of the committee had been, he recommended that I reserve any formal work on religion until after I completed my PhD in a more respected area. That, he said, was what he did. I accepted his advice and I took my examinations instead on the topic of personality change in the normal adult. It was a topic inspired by a recent book, but I also wanted to confirm that the changes I personally aspired to were a genuine possibility.

Disappointed by the evident disdain for the psychology of religion among at least some of the psychology faculty members, I prepared and distributed a virtual apologia for the field in the form of an elaborate, 55-page description and evaluation of the 1965 course offering. The report started off with a ten-page historical overview of the field, in America and Europe; then followed the syllabus, various hand-outs, including annotated reading lists, and both statistical and qualitative summaries

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<sup>3</sup> My course is described in some detail in Michaelsen's (1965) study of the teaching of religion in American universities. Michigan was one of his ten case studies.

of the numerous course evaluations. Also included were one-page summaries of the students' comments on each of the books I had assigned. Robert MacLeod, then back at Cornell, urged me to send the evaluation to the living authors of the textbooks as well as to several psychologists with whom he was engaged in ongoing discussions of psychology and religion (see Haven, 1968).

Among the encouraging replies I received, the one from Gordon Allport touched me the most. He wrote, "What you have hit on as appropriate content is very much like my own program in Junior tutorial groups, dealing with this subject"; he enclosed a syllabus to underscore this point. He concluded his letter by saying, "Since there are very few psychologists who have worked in the field of psychology of religion, I hope you will not only continue your interest in it but develop it over the years as a deeper specialty" (Allport, personal communication, November 15, 1966). That, of course, I did.

I was also encouraged by Walter Clark, through correspondence and then conversation, when he stopped in Ann Arbor on his way to Chicago. Clark was at that time deeply involved in research on psychedelic drugs (Clark, 1969), and he encouraged my interest in that direction by sending me two of his own reprints and one from Sanford Ungar (1963), who was then the chief therapist at the Psychedelic Therapy Research Program of Spring Grove State Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. Around that time one of my students gave me two LSD tablets to try, but lacking an experienced guide and not sure what to believe about alleged side effects, I finally discarded the substance. Walter Pahnke, famous for his research with psilocybin, also encouraged this interest through his presence and supportive remarks at a Kent-Conference session where I gave a paper on drug-induced mystical experiences.

The burgeoning enrollments in the course if not also my apologia for it prompted a social psychology professor in the department, Elizabeth Douvan,<sup>4</sup> to suggest that I consider writing a textbook on the subject. Enchanted by that prospect but utterly naïve about what such a project would entail, I was directed to Edward Walker, a Michigan experimental psychologist I had studied with and the consulting editor for Brooks-Cole, a new division of Wadsworth Publishing specializing in psychology. Within a year I signed a contract with Brooks-Cole, little suspecting how many years it would take me to complete the book, and that it would be with a different publisher.

With my dissertation, "Temporal Orientation and Its Measurement," finished and accepted in the Fall of 1969, when I began teaching at Wheaton College in Massachusetts, I was finally free, the following summer, to start working on the book in earnest. To assemble a truly comprehensive bibliography on the psychology of religion, I systematically copied all of the references on religion and related topics (each on a 4 × 6 in. card, including the abstract) that were listed in the *Psychological Index*, published from 1894 to 1928, and then in *Psychological Abstracts*, begun in 1927. William Meissner's *Annotated Bibliography in Religion and Psychology*

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<sup>4</sup>Douvan made the remark to her officemate, Martin Gold, who then passed it on to me. I wish to recognize both of them here, for without this suggestion and Walker's subsequent encouragement and facilitation, I may never have had the courage to undertake so major a project.

(1961), although an invaluable aid, proved to be far from inclusive of these sources. I also scoured every academic library catalogue to which I had access, to find books related to the psychology of religion and in turn to examine their reference lists. As my bibliography filled one file drawer, then another, I resumed my efforts from my graduate-school years to obtain copies of every book and article that I could.

While still at Michigan I had visited antiquarian bookstores in Chicago and Cambridge, Massachusetts; sent search lists to book dealers in the United States and Europe; read through the book catalogues they sent to me; requested offprints from authors of journal articles if I could find their addresses; and made copies when I was otherwise unsuccessful. Widener Library at Harvard, once I had moved east, was especially helpful, for not only did it have many of the obscure publications I was after but it also provided a reproduction service superior to the public photocopying machines of that time. Many of the living authors gladly provided offprints of their articles, some of which were decades old, and several sent me copies of their books as well. Alphons Bolley, one of the last surviving members of the Dorpat School, sent me his own personal copy of his book on prayer.

As these materials accumulated, I indexed them by topic in an elaborate card file, initially organized according to the projected table of contents of the book but soon expanded to accommodate other topics as well. Notes that I took while reading and marking these resources, along with ideas and fragments of potential text, also went into this file, which eventually filled three drawers (the reference file filled five others). Thus the actual writing of the book was postponed for some time, as I methodically lay the bibliographic and intellectual foundations for the truly comprehensive work that I increasingly aspired to write.

A major impetus and resource for such a work was my marriage in 1969 to Donna Beik, who was then a graduate student in the history of religions at Harvard, a specialist in Indology, and a fellow Kent Fellow.<sup>5</sup> Through her, in turn, I came to know the Canadian historian of religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the founding director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard, as well as visiting international scholars and other graduate students who were also in residence at the Center – “God’s Motel,” it was called, given its setup and appearance – which had been recently constructed on Francis Avenue across from the Harvard Divinity School. Smith’s work was particularly instrumental in how I came to think about “religion” and “belief,” both terms that I, like many others, had once taken for granted.

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<sup>5</sup> It was in 1967, at Donna’s first weeklong Kent conference and my second, that we met. Kent Fellowships, originally offered by the National Council on Religion to promote inquiry into values in higher education, were by this time administered and funded by the Danforth Foundation. Unlike the better-known Danforth Graduate Fellowships, Kent Fellowships were awarded, 50 a year, to those whose graduate studies were already underway. I was nominated for a Kent by Willard Oxtoby, a Canadian professor of comparative religion who, while visiting at the University of Michigan, heard me give a public lecture on existential psychology. Will urged me to apply, not so much for the financial support, but for the subsequent associations through membership in the Society for Values in Higher Education, the alumni association of Danforth and Kent fellowship holders.

Over the years that I worked on the book, I twice traveled to India with Donna as she carried out research on the Bengali Vaisnava movement and in particular *Kirtan*, a popular form of devotion that combines music, dance, and drama in hours-long performances. With our primary residence in Varanasi the first time and Shantiniketan the second, we traveled throughout various parts of India, especially to see classic temple sites and to witness major religious festivals, including the remarkable Jagennath Festival in Puri, Orissa. The year and a half that I spent in India were vital for helping me to see beyond the classic Protestant-Christian framework of the psychology of religion and to appreciate how profoundly and diversely religious traditions can shape the rest of human culture and illuminate individual lives.

India also provided periods of intense concentration in the midst of idyllic natural settings. To escape the oppressive summer heat of Varanasi, we spent seven weeks in a remote area some 16 miles from Almora, a north Indian hill station once popular with the British. The house in which we rented two rooms had no electricity, and water came trickling into the house through a pipe from a spring higher up on the mountain. We brought our Muslim cook with us, to his great pleasure, and supplies were fetched once a week on foot from Almora by a servant of our closest neighbors, who lived a 20-minute, rock-strewn walk away. Once the monsoon cleared the dusty air, we had breathtaking views of the Himalayas, including Nanda Devi, the second-highest peak. At night, the sky was dense beyond all imagining with stars. It was in this context that I did much of my systematic reading in several volumes of C. G. Jung's *Collected Works*, one of which I had brought with me and the others, remarkably, made available by the neighbor from his library.

During the summer escape of our second trip to India, the Himalayas were once again a near-daily experience, but this time from the perspective of Darjeeling. We rented a small room in the guesthouse of the Northfield School and worked on our projects in the school's majestic, wood-paneled library, the large windows of which looked out on a tiered tea plantation and beyond that, the Himalayas. This time my major project was a close rereading and indexing of William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) as well as first drafts of text on the work. I had acquired one of the early Longmans, Green printings of this classic and taken it to Harvard's Houghton Library, to copy into it the numerous annotations in James's personal copy. In Darjeeling, I thoroughly marked the text as I read it once again, this time filling out the book's rather incomplete index and keeping track on notecards of important distinctions, themes, opinions, and sources. I indexed all of the 200-some case studies in the book, for example; kept track of the various metaphors that James was so skillful in using; and made note of all of his typologies. I also copied out striking phrases and sentences that I anticipated quoting. My admiration for the *Varieties* grew exponentially in the process, and many years later I started collecting editions of it, including translations. As I write now, I have more than 60 editions and printings in 15 languages, including a first American printing, bound in green half leather by the now-defunct London bookbinding firm Morrell, that James had inscribed to Susan Atkinson, the sister of his long-time friend Charles Follen Atkinson.

So meticulous a reading of texts and taking of notes naturally required an enormous investment of time. So, too, did the planning and drafting of text. On a few

occasions I was tempted to rely instead on secondary sources, especially if seemingly competent and trustworthy ones were available. But I soon discovered that I could not write with confidence without having read, marked, and digested the original source material myself. In the process I found myself correcting what I had learned as a student on the basis of secondary works – for example, that Freud had compared the psyche to an iceberg, when in fact he did not. I was surprised by the number of errors that can be found in textbooks, even highly regarded ones. I was determined that the same would not be found true of mine.

The nearly obsessive manner in which I worked and the time it was taking had one distinct advantage: It increased the probability of serendipitous discoveries and allowed sufficient time to solve some mysteries. It was only by chance, for example, that I came across Smiley Blanton's (1971) report of Freud's negative reaction to Abraham Roback's (1929) book arguing for Jewish origins of psychoanalysis; Roback's book had arrived from the author just the day before the therapy session I cited. It took nearly ten years, for another instance, to reconcile Emanuel Swedenborg's stroke-triggered loss of his angelic voices with contemporary theories regarding brain lateralization. Time, too, allowed the accumulation of evidence regarding the experience of and attitudes toward music of major contributors to the psychology of religion, although in this case I left it to the alert reader to pull the evidence together and speculate about possible connections.

Beyond the embarrassment of taking so long to complete the book was the more consequential risk of not receiving tenure. At the time it seemed a tactical error to have committed to writing a book of so large a compass, especially with a teaching load (three courses a semester) that effectively meant I had only the summer and vacations for serious work on the book. I had sterling student course evaluations and large enrollments in my courses when I was required to come up for tenure; but I had hardly any track record of publication, mainly just a manuscript in progress, albeit one well reviewed by outside examiners. Furthermore, religion once again threatened to be a topic that some of those in a position to determine my fate would find unacceptable. The seniormost member of my department was candid about her opposition to my receiving tenure, saying that she feared that I would "go over to the other side," apparently meaning that I would become a religious zealot. My tenure hearing extended nearly 13 hours over three days (a record, most likely) but I finally did receive it. Promotion to full professor was subsequently delayed by several years, until I had completed the manuscript, or nearly so, and had published two other pieces, one an overview of the psychology of religion, with a particular emphasis on methods and issues (Wulff, 1985a), the other a paper on the Dorpat School of Religious Psychology (Wulff, 1985b),<sup>6</sup> which is an expansion of what appears on the school in my book.

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<sup>6</sup> In 1994 at a conference in Sweden, I was deeply gratified to learn from Tonu Lehtsaar that this paper served to revive the long-lost institutional memory of the Dorpat School. The Faculty of Theology at Dorpat University, now the University of Tartu, was closed by the Soviets in 1940 and reopened only in 1991. As a member of the Faculty of Theology, Lehtsaar offers courses on the psychology of religion and related subjects.



The book's publication was delayed still further by my conclusion that Brooks-Cole, exclusively a publisher of textbooks, was not the appropriate house for publishing a work that had evolved into something other than a soon-to-be-outdated textbook.<sup>7</sup> Thus I asked to be released from my original contract, which Brooks-Cole graciously did, and went in search of a more appropriate publisher. In the end, four houses offered contracts, including Oxford University Press, but Wiley won out, partly because it was prepared to include an indefinite number of pictures and would place them with the relevant text, rather than as an insert in the middle. Length, in fact, seemed not to be an issue: When a reader of the manuscript suggested that I include a glossary, my editor, Deborah Moore, encouraged me to put one together. Enthusiastic about the book from the outset, Deborah was unstinting in its production, every detail of which she closely monitored. She also decided to put the dust jacket and its laudatory blurbs on all 2000 copies of the first printing rather than just those going out to potential academic adopters. Deborah arrived at Wiley just months before she offered me a contract and then left to take a position at another publishing house a few months after the book came out; I could not have been more fortunate.

Research for the pictures was left to me, although I was given a budget for it of \$1,500 – a rather modest sum, I soon came to realize. It took me most of a year to identify and gather the pictures, as well as an additional \$1,380 out of my own pocket. In a few instances, it was obvious what picture, or at least what category of illustration, would best augment the text. But extended stretches of the text threatened to be a wasteland as far as pictures would go. I wanted every one of them to have a genuine pedagogical function, and some topics did not easily lend themselves to visual illustration. For ideas – this was before the Internet and Google Images – I sorted through newspaper articles I had clipped, flipped through numerous library books, and systematically went through files of pictures at the Library of Congress in Washington. I also wrote to scholars for particular images I thought they might be able to provide, as indeed they were happy to do in several cases. One photograph, of life-size sculpted baboons perched on an altar in the Sun Temple near the Abu Simbel temples in southern Egypt was particularly elusive, mainly because the baboons had been removed from the temple for safekeeping in 1915; but it was finally forthcoming from a French research institute in Cairo after a Brooklyn Museum curator advised me to request it once more, but this time by express mail (Wulff, 2010). Pictures also arrived from Israel, Italy, Switzerland, Mexico, and Spain. Given the thought and effort I put into obtaining these illustrations and the generosity of many of those who supplied them, I was mildly disappointed that, to my knowledge, no reviewer of the book chose to comment on them.

For the book's cover, which Deborah invited me to design, I wanted a human image, to underscore that it was the human side of religion that this book was about; but I also wanted it to be androgynous, and one that was not clearly associated with any one religious tradition. I found just such an image at the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, a 15-minute walk from my home. There, in one

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<sup>7</sup>In an extensive and highly appreciative characterization of the book, the historian William Johnston (1998, pp. 275, 276) describes it as a handbook “disguised as a textbook....the closest thing to a German-style handbook that North Americans are likely to see.”

of the Asian galleries and dating from the sixth-century C.E., was an “Adoring Bodhisattva” from a cave temple in the Shansi province of China, thus a Buddhist image, but one exhibiting an expressive posture that could be easily found in other traditions as well. It was also aesthetically pleasing.<sup>8</sup> The RISD Museum contributed two other pictures as well, one of a room-size Japanese Buddha from the tenth century C.E. and the other of Nataraja, Siva dancing within a ring of fire. For all of these pictures I was generously charged only a nominal fee, to cover the cost of providing the photographs.

What did I hope for my book after so many years of painstaking labor? From the beginning, I aspired to represent as sympathetically as possible a diversity of points of view and to evaluate each in terms appropriate to it. But as I discovered how large, complex, and scattered the literature was, and how much it had ramified internationally, I felt a growing responsibility to the field as a whole, even in its details. I discovered errors in the literature, for example, that would easily mislead others, such as the confusion of Goodwin B. Watson, an ordained minister and a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, with John B. Watson, the proponent of behaviorism who disparaged religion, and I made an effort to learn how to pronounce various scholars’ names (e.g., I confirmed in correspondence with James Leuba’s son, Clarence, that the first syllable of Leuba is pronounced like *feu*, the French word for fire). But mainly I was focused on the following broad goals.

## Providing an Authoritative Overview of the Field

Most generally, I wanted to provide a structured overview that would establish a common international understanding of the field, including its historical origins and its contemporary forms. Studies of syllabi of American courses on the “psychology of religion” or “psychology and religion” have made evident that many of these courses are constructed in highly idiosyncratic ways. Whereas courses in personality psychology, for example, typically follow one of several well-established ways of organizing the field, with an emphasis either on classic theories, contemporary research, or some mix of the two, no equivalent models were evident in the psychology of religion at the time I was writing. Furthermore, assigned readings sometimes fall outside even the most generously drawn boundaries of the field.

Providing a faithful overview required, first of all, the identification and retrieval of the works of all notable contributors to the field, in America and Europe, with a particular eye for those who, over the decades, have fallen into neglect, sometimes because of linguistic barriers. Then followed the challenge of deciding which contributors to include in the book, what to emphasize of their work, and how much space to give to it relative to the work of others. For the psychoanalytic approaches, for example, I had a reference list of over 900 books and articles; which of the

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<sup>8</sup>This image was likewise used for the second edition, but there it is far less distinct. Furthermore, the designer of the new cover mistakenly left off “Views” from the title. On reflection, I decided that I preferred the title without it, hence the slight title change.

authors and themes should I feature? I found it important, too, when I was able,<sup>9</sup> to consult the original editions of translated works. Heiler's (1918/1969) massive study of prayer, for example, was drastically foreshortened in the English translation, leaving out, among other things, one of his types (the hymn) as well as his rare analysis of prayer gestures; I carefully restored both in my summation. Similarly, by consulting Kretschmer's (1961) final revision of his work on physique and character, I was able to update the analysis of the athletic type that is found in the 1936 English translation and to note his important qualification of his types, which he emphasized were abstractions, not containers for sorting people.

I also wanted to locate the field more precisely than heretofore in its personal and cultural contexts. I prepared biographical studies of four prominent founding contributors – Hall, James, Freud, and Jung – to make evident how the work of each issued out of his own life history. These studies, accordingly, had to be more extensive and informative than the brief biographical sketches that are typically offered in textbooks on theories of personality. But widespread intellectual and cultural currents, along with some distinctly practical factors, most certainly also played roles in the evolution of the field. I was particularly struck by the influences, seemingly overlooked by others, of the social activism and reform efforts that constituted the Progressive movement in the United States, extending from the 1890s to the 1920s. Several of the field's founders were directly involved in one of Progressivism's main streams, the Social Gospel movement. But there were other influential historical events as well, including World War I, the so-called American religious depression that immediately followed, the economic depression, National Socialism, and World War II. Most of these, and others as well, I considered at one point or another in my book; but in a later publication, I made their collective influence graphically evident by charting a variety of publications in the field, both books and journals, in English and German, against these six historical events (Wulff, 1998). I hoped to demonstrate thereby that no simple formula is adequate for describing the waxings and wanings of the psychology of religion in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe.

## **Counterbalancing the Field's Protestant-Christian Disposition**

The psychology of religion was founded and long dominated by Protestant Christians, albeit liberal ones, who by and large chose their constructs (e.g., conversion) and their participants from within their own tradition. Furthermore, psychology of religion was particularly welcomed in Protestant schools of theology; and in the United States even today, it is taught mainly in departments of religion at Protestant church-related schools. More significantly, numerous measures of "religiosity," and

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<sup>9</sup>At Michigan, I was among the last of the PhD students who were required to pass examinations in two foreign languages, which for me were German and French. I collected books on the psychology of religion in a dozen languages, for each of which I obtained a dictionary if not also a grammar.

now “spirituality,” have a Protestant-Christian if not Evangelical-Christian flavor to them, and most research participants share these religious perspectives. Those who do not are screened out of the studies, rather than being accommodated by developing more inclusive assessment devices.

Inevitably, then, any survey of the field will reflect this Protestant-Christian bias. In my book I sought to counter it in two ways. First, I made careful note of this bias, most obviously in Table P.1 in the preface to my book (Wulff, 1997b, p. viii), in which I indicate, among other things, the chapters in which the various religious traditions are present or absent. Only the Christian tradition appears in all of them. Toward the same end, I critique the biases of some of the most notable measuring instruments, especially the still widely used Allport–Ross Religious Orientation scales. Second, I incorporated case studies, ritual practices, mythic elaborations, and research findings drawn from or based on other religious traditions. In a less obvious gesture, I substituted C.E. (Common Era) and B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) for the Christocentric expressions A.D. (*Anno Domini*, or Year of [our or the] Lord) and B.C. (Before Christ). Reflecting the book’s content and my anticipations of its readers’ needs, the glossary contains numerous terms from diverse religious traditions, and the subject index – the indexes, for better or worse, were my responsibility – clusters the various traditions together under the heading “Religious traditions,” making evident yet again their comparative presence in the book.<sup>10</sup>

## Incorporating Insights from the History of Religions

Even before I was drawn by marriage into the orbit of historians of religion, I understood the value of being well acquainted with both the broad outlines and the particularities of the various religious traditions. As the foundation for such familiarity I acquired James Hastings’s (1908–1926) classic *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* several years after it was reprinted in 1961. Shelved next to it now is the revised edition of Mircea Eliade’s *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Jones, 2005) as well as a number of other reference works. Convinced by Johnston (1998) of the value of such works for a scholar’s personal library, I obtained and reviewed several of them for the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* in 2007 and 2008. While still a graduate student I also systematically acquired works on the philosophy and the phenomenology of religion as well as classic works in the history of religions and books on the anthropology and sociology of religion. To this day, most serve me mainly as reference works, not textbooks that I read systematically.

I drew regularly on these other literatures in the writing of my book, often to provide descriptions and examples of phenomena that I wished to present for psychological analysis. More significantly, they provided useful generalizations cutting

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<sup>10</sup> Regrettably, in the first printing of the second edition, there were occasional errors in the index at this point and elsewhere; these I was able to correct in the second and third printings. No changes were made in the book after the third printing.

across traditions, and they provided guidance when it came to choosing basic terminology, especially the word “religion.” I was deeply convinced – I remain surprised that others are not – by Wilfred Smith’s (1963) argument that the nouns “religion” and “religions,” as well as the various “isms” commonly used to refer to specific traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism, even Christianity), are seriously misleading and ought to be avoided whenever possible. Following his recommendations, I minimize my use of these nouns and instead use “tradition” to refer to the historical changing actualities and “faith” to reference the individual’s appropriation and responses to the traditions. In a subsequent work (Wulff, 1999), I similarly draw on Smith’s analysis of the word “belief” to make the case that this term, too, is highly problematic. In this instance, however, alternatives are much harder to come by.

### **Valorizing Both Natural- and Human-Scientific Perspectives**

In the United States, at least, those interested in the psychology of religion tend to fall into two camps: (1) the *empiricists*, found mainly in psychology departments, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and Division 36 of the American Psychological Association (if they haven’t jumped ship for the more scientifically oriented American Psychological Society); and (2) the *hermeneuticists*, found chiefly in departments of religious studies and in the Psychology, Culture, and Religion Group of the American Academy of Religion. Members of the first group are fiercely loyal to the empirical methods of contemporary psychology – foremost, measurement and hypothesis testing. Those in the second one are dedicated to examining, critiquing, and applying psychological theories of religion, especially those of Freud and Jung, as well as considering various issues that concern practitioners.

Largely setting practical applications aside, I sought to give voice to both camps as faithfully as I could. I had the advantage of having studied and taught quantitative methods and of being well acquainted with personality and social-psychological theories as well. For many years I introduced most of my courses with a schema of “Two Traditions of Psychology,” the natural-scientific and the human-scientific, the objective and the subjective, with the intent of giving voice to each. So also, then, is my book organized, evident once again in Table P.1.

Other psychology textbooks likewise represent a diversity of perspectives, but too often the authors’ preference for one of them distorts the representation of all the others, especially when it comes time to evaluate them. Almost always that preferred viewpoint is the empirical one, and too often human-scientific approaches are poorly represented.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, I sought to become a temporary proponent of each

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<sup>11</sup> Among the most troubling to me of these misrepresentations is the defining of phenomenology (if the term appears at all) as an individual’s idiosyncratic subjective experience. It is, rather, the disciplined study of that which appears, as free as possible of assumptions or predispositions. Phenomenology arose to restore experience – “the things in themselves,” as Husserl put it – to discourse in philosophy, psychology, and other fields that had, under the press of logical empiricism, systematically ruled it out.

perspective as I wrote about it, and when it came time to critique the perspective, I aimed to do it chiefly on its own terms (while also representing the critiques of others). In every case, as I remark in the epilogue, the ultimate criterion was an approach's phenomenological adequacy. How open was it to the full range of the phenomena it was seeking to comprehend? How faithfully did it represent them? How illuminating were the conclusions it finally drew?

I received some assurance in advance of publication that these goals had been reached, at least in significant measure. I sent out to the major living contributors (e.g., Daniel Batson, Erik Erikson, Roland Fischer, James Fowler, Michael Persinger, B. F. Skinner, and Wilfred Smith) those sections I had written about them, and some colleagues read other sections as well. Responses were consistently positive, even enthusiastic. Paul Pruyser, a Dutch-born clinical psychologist at the Menninger Foundation, offered to read additional chapters beyond the section on his work and then wrote a generous and encouraging letter to me in response.<sup>12</sup>

Reviews of the book, which was published in time to appear at the 1990 APA convention, were overwhelmingly favorable as well, even in religiously conservative journals. *Contemporary Psychology* honored it with a pair of extensive reviews, by Bernard Spilka and Michael Donahue, and placed them at the front of the issue. Still, there was at least one dissenting voice. Jean-Pierre Deconchy (1991), a priest-psychologist with a marked empirical orientation, reviewed my book in conjunction with several others using Descartes's pineal gland as a metaphor for criticizing what he saw in our books as unscientific speculation. In the work on Erikson's psychology of religion, for example, Deconchy said that the pineal gland had been "microtomized." In my book it had metastasized. Deconchy expressed satisfaction with my four chapters on the objective approaches, but he thought that the chapters on subjective perspectives represented a systemic intellectual cancer. To document the extent of the metastasis, he added up the number of pages on which the names of Freud, Jung, and Erikson appear. In at least one case, then, my appeal for openness to alternate perspectives had failed to find fertile ground. But this response, I am glad to say, was not typical, at least not of those in print.

In 1991 the book was awarded the Quinquennial Prize then given by the International Commission for Scientific Psychology of Religion. Soon followed the news that the book was being translated into Swedish at the instigation of Kurt Bergling at Lund University, with the skillful labors of his wife, Barbro, and his colleague Jan Hermanson. Kurt was also instrumental in my being awarded an honorary doctorate in theology by Lund in 1993, which coincided with the translation's

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<sup>12</sup> Selections from his remarks, edited with the permission of his widow to direct them to the book rather than to me, appear on the back of the dust jacket of the first edition. Pruyser (personal communication, October 9, 1986) had written that "you do a magnificent and much needed job combating the parochialism and fragmentation that I find rampant in this special discipline. You also contribute substantially to a much needed comprehensiveness that this discipline deserves and for which you show chapter after chapter its potential. Thirdly, you foster, what nobody has yet done, international cross-fertilization in a discipline that for most of this century has lived in nationalistic and linguistic isolation. I know of no other work in the psychology of religion that is as magnificently *informative* and *broad-scoped* as yours promises to be."

publication. A Polish translation, mainly by Pawel Socha, followed a few years later, and at the time of this writing a Chinese translation is nearing completion.

In the United States in 1991, my colleagues in Division 36, Psychology of Religion,<sup>13</sup> of the American Psychological Association honored me with the William C. Bier Award “for outstanding and sustained contributions to the field.” In 1993, I was elected to Fellow status in the Division (and a year later, also in Division 2, Teaching of Psychology). And in 1997 I was elected Division 36’s president.

I have naturally deeply appreciated the warm reception that my work has received, especially among Europeans, and the friendship that British and European colleagues have extended to me. In one 16-month period, I traveled six times to the Continent, and over the years I have been a visiting scholar at Åbo Akademi University in Finland; served from 2003 to 2007 on the Scientific Advisory Board for the initiative “Religion in the 21st Century” at the University of Copenhagen; and was the 2007 Edward Cadbury Lecturer at the University of Birmingham, on the topic, “The Mind of the Religious Conservative.”

But the question remains: has my work genuinely made a difference in the field? Have my decades of labor, including publications since my book first appeared, successfully encouraged at least a few others to adopt the goals I had in mind? My efforts to track my work’s influence have been sporadic at best, but my impressions on the whole leave me feeling moderately encouraged. I have been pleased to note that the contributions of James Pratt in the United States, Theodore Flournoy in Switzerland, and Harald and Kristian Schjelderup in Norway have found renewed attention, apparently from my having featured them in my book. Wilfred Smith’s views as I have represented them have also occasionally been noted in other works, but they seem to have changed few minds.

What I did not anticipate, however, was that the two-dimensional schema in the epilogue of my book would spark special interest. Intended initially as a simple way of summing up the various approaches to the psychology of religion in relation to each other, the diagram came also to serve as a way of roughly characterizing individuals, in accord with whether they include transcendence in their views and whether they understand religious content literally or symbolically. This schema has found its way onto the Internet and into publications, most significantly in the form of the Post-Critical Belief Scale that Dirk Hutsebaut (1996) and his associates developed to operationalize the faith positions of the diagram’s four quadrants. Tens of thousands of participants have by now completed their questionnaires, along with other measures, and more than 60 journal articles have reported findings that offer support for the usefulness of the schema, including with persons of other traditions (Ghorbani, Watson, Shamohammadi, & Cunningham, 2009). I was naturally pleased to be able to incorporate some of the initial findings into my discussion of the schema in the revised 1997 edition of my book.

Meanwhile, I have continued in my role as expositor, historian, and critic of the field. I have agreed to write encyclopedia entries on the psychology of religion in

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<sup>13</sup> The Division’s name was change by an overwhelming vote of its membership in 2011 to the Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality.

order to ensure that those unfamiliar with it will have a fair, balanced, and accurate introduction (e.g., Wulff, 2009). I continue to raise concerns about parochialism, apologetics, and hidden agendas, among other issues, and I remain concerned about flawed conceptions, inadequate assessment devices, and overdrawn conclusions. I have even boldly suggested that it may be time for proponents of the field to start over (Wulff, 1992, 1997a, 2000, 2001–2002, 2003).

Starting anew, in fact, is what I have finally myself set out to do, in collaboration with an international group of colleagues. First inspired by Jack Block's California Q-Sort, a 100-item set of phrases carefully selected to make possible a comprehensive description of personality, and then stimulated anew by the burgeoning literature on Q methodology, I have created what I call the Faith Q-Sort (FQS), using faith much as Wilfred Smith would have us understand it. The FQS is designed to characterize the faith of potentially any individual and to note, then, trends in groups of participants. Although grounded in a qualitative methodology, the 101-item FQS yields factor loadings that may be used for correlational research.

In conceiving the complex "concourse," or domain of subjectivity, that the FQS items are intended to represent, I drew on a wide diversity of sources: fundamental features of the major religious traditions, though phrased in generic terms; classic conceptions in the psychology of religion (e.g., James's healthy-minded and sick-soul types); variables currently prominent in the field (e.g., the intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest orientations; God representations; closeness to God); attitudes toward religious scriptures; broad cognitive dispositions; general views of the world; attitudes toward religion and spirituality, including their centrality or importance; forms of expression; views of the problems of theodicy and religious pluralism; themes that have emerged from notable case studies; and still other variables, including ones intended to accommodate the religiously indifferent or hostile. At the same time I kept the use of the problematic words "religion" and "believe" to a bare minimum. The 101 statements representing this concourse are presented on laminated cards to the participant, who is asked to sort them according to a forced distribution along a nine-point scale ranging from least to most descriptive. I am also considering the possibility of presenting the statements online.

Factor analysis of the sortings of the FQS statements by diverse participant groups has yielded three main prototypes thus far: Traditionally Theistic, Secular-Humanistic, and Spiritually Attuned. But minor prototypes, such as Reluctantly Skeptical, Situationally Religious, and Institutionally Anchored, may take a variety of forms, some unique to a single participant group and defined mainly by one person. Upward to two-thirds of the members of a participant group are likely to be identified as "defining variables," that is, as loading relatively high on one prototype and effectively not at all on all the rest. The remaining individuals are what I call hybrids, persons who load moderately on two or three prototypes.<sup>14</sup> It is rare for an individual to load on none, suggesting that the collection of statements is sufficiently encompassing

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<sup>14</sup> I am myself just such a hybrid, combining in about equal measure the Spiritually Attuned, Secular-Humanistic, and Religious-Humanistic prototypes. Given especially that a hybrid of three is relatively uncommon, potential critics may be assured that there is no "Wulff prototype."



to provide virtually everyone with sufficient options. It is also the case that none of the statements fails to distinguish among at least some of the prototypes.

The FQS has now been translated into fourteen languages, and studies are ongoing with still more diverse participant groups and in conjunction with a growing number of other variables, including the Intrinsic–Extrinsic scales, attachment-to-God scales, and the Rokeach and Schwartz value surveys. Apart from such nomothetic research, the FQS obviously lends itself to idiographic study of single individuals, whether in research or clinical settings. I have been particularly gratified that participants often say that they find the sorting of the FQS to be an engaging exercise, especially because it invites them to address questions and make judgments that they had not considered before. And many have welcomed with real interest the individual feedback that I provide, including their loadings on their group’s prototypes.

I cannot predict, of course, what the half-life will be for the Faith Q-Sort. But I hope that it will at least serve to stimulate others – especially young scholars new to the field – to search for more adequate ways of representing the religious or spiritual vector in human lives, and from there to develop a more adequate and penetrating psychology of religion. Indeed, that is the end toward which all of my work has been directed.

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